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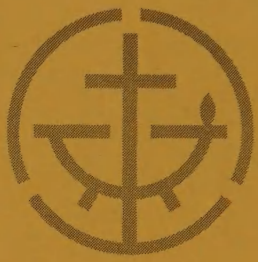

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The Mind of the Messiah

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TO

ALL THE STUDENTS

OF THE

NATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL

WHO WITH ME HAVE TRAVERSED THE PAGES OF THE GOSPELS AND FOUND IN THEM THE LIFE WHICH IS THE LIGHT OF MEN, THESE STUDIES ARE GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

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A SKETCH OF JEWISH RELIGIOUS HISTORY FROM THE EXILE TO NEW TESTAMENT TIMES.

When we open the pages of the New Testament, we become conscious that we are in an entirely different environment, political, social, and religious, from that which is reflected in the Old Testament. New conditions of life and thought are everywhere meeting us; new forces are at work which were not present in the old days of Hebrew history.

Instead of a royal house which held the allegiance of the people, there is an alien monarch, representing a great empire whose capital is in a distant land, far away from Jerusalem. In the place of prophets and wise men, clothed in simple garb and speaking a burning message which comes fresh from their own deep fellowship with Jehovah, rebuking sin in stern and uncompromising terms, or giving gentle counsel in quaint proverb or vivid imagery, walk the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees in flowing robes and austere demeanor, having little contact with the life of simple folk. We feel the absence of the ruggedness and simplicity of the earlier days. Religion has somehow lost its contact with life and thus much of its vitality is gone. The synagogue, an institution unknown in the Old Testament, is exerting a powerful influence upon the religious and social life of the people. Indeed, it is not long before we realize that the religious life of the Jews, which is reflected in the Gospels, is the result of a long and gradual development, the roots of which are hidden in the past.

Eight centuries separate the period of Amos and Hosea from the days of Jesus. These centuries held momentous issues, not only for those who were the actors in that historic drama, where darkness and light, despair and hope struggled together for ascendency, as in a majestic symphony, but also for the great world lying outside. In the coming days this world, which seemed so independent of and hostile to these little kingdoms, which were only a speck among the nations, was to be lighted by the flame which even then was burning in the heart of the Hebrew people, and was destined one day to burst upon it as the sun shining in its strength, bearing healing in its rays.

We must travel through these centuries too rapidly to do more than touch the significant events, always remembering that behind what is seen lie those hidden forces which are creating new worlds out of the old, changing not only the political environment but the religious as well. In so far as we are able to penetrate the visible we shall find ourselves in the laboratory of the Divine Spirit, who, with infinite patience, waits for the development of the myriad combinations which are one day to work out a great achievement.

To walk through history with God is to return to the present with a faith which can visualize victory and see in the travail pains of each succeeding age the birth of a new and larger order in the onward march to that "far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves." Let us turn to these centuries lying behind the New Testament and feel the breadth of their sweep and the depth of their current.

The point of departure, both politically and religiously, is the period known as the Exile, when the national

life of the Hebrews was terminated by Babylon, and the period of captivity in an alien land, which was destined to hold such important results for the future, began. In the furnace of a great national affliction the Hebrews learned the truths which have ever since distinguished them. In the loss of political independence they gained spiritual sovereignty.

Up to the time of the Exile the religious history of the Hebrews was marked by frequent lapses and by a strange mingling of pagan elements which called out the vehement protest of the prophets. It was the continuation of the conflict which began in the days of Elijah between two conceptions of religion, the popular and the prophetic, which was mainly a conflict between two opposing conceptions of God, the one ethical and spiritual, the other debased and sensual. Although the prophetic won that day on Mt. Carmel, when Elijah summoned the people and the priests of Baal to a great assize and the sun went down on a scene of blood and terror to the sympathizers with the Baal cult, still the conquest of the mind and heart remained for his successors to accomplish. The people were too thoroughly saturated with the religious ideas and practices of the surrounding countries to throw off the fascination which they held for them; their eyes were so blinded by the false standards which were fostered by their own desires and low conceptions of Jehovah, that the spiritual and ethical preaching of the prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries fell for the most part upon deaf ears.

And yet during this very time there was much religious observance, and Jehovah was being worshipped with most ardent zeal. The short and thrilling book of Amos tells the story of social injustice and lax morality

combined with religious zeal, which calls out the passionate denunciation of the prophet against the sins which were eating out the heart of the nation's life and the religious unreality which was blinding the eyes and hardening the hearts of his people. The dark shadow of Assyria—the empire which then was the dominating political factor of the Eastern world—at first seemed no larger than a man's hand, but crept steadily nearer and grew more ominous, until the little kingdom of Israel was swallowed up by it and passed into oblivion.

It is therefore the smaller kingdom of Judah which has preserved the rich heritage of the Hebrews and become the torch-bearer for the world. But before Judah could attain to such a position, she too had to pass out of her own land and learn through suffering to know her God. The disaster which befell her sister in the north made little impression upon her, although by temperament and training the Hebrews associated national disaster with Divine discipline.

That which has made the eighth and seventh centuries significant in history is not the extinction of one small kingdom and the discipline of the other, but the majestic figures of the Hebrew prophets, who stand in bold relief against the tottering walls of their nation's life and proclaim that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the Sovereign of the universe, and that the nations are his instruments, accomplishing his purposes in the earth. The pure monotheism of the prophets and their exalted ethical standards of conduct were like the peaks of great mountains covered with the dazzling purity of the eternal snows. The people heard and comprehended not; they saw but were blinded by the whiteness of the light.

One of the sacraments of God from all time has been

life and its experiences, through which truth is mediated to us and we see into the heart of things. That which is true in individuals is seen in the transformation of the religious beliefs of the Jewish people as the direct result of the Exile. In spite of her prophets, Judah carried to Babylon the old tribal conception of Jehovah, which identified him with their land and thought of him as one of many other gods, greater, but localized and belonging to them as a people. The unit in the thinking of the Hebrews was the nation, and religion was more largely a national matter than a personal one, associated in the popular mind with a visible temple and outward forms. When the national unit was no more and the outward forms of religion were gone, a new unit and a new worship must be discovered if religion were to survive the shock. This new unit and new worship were found by the exiles through the help of their spiritual leaders, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The latter was with them in Babylon and taught them with solemn intensity the new and startling truth of personal accountability to God. He tore away both family and national solidarity and left the individual in the presence of his God to answer for himself alone (Ezek. 18).

The Hebrews were surrounded in Babylon by a magnificent polytheism, and while some fell under its power, there was created in its very midst an intense and permanent monotheism, which from that time to this has been the distinguishing religious characteristic of the Jews. If there were but one supreme God and he Jehovah, the next stage in their religious education was at hand—the discovery that God was not limited to time or space or territory, and was as close to them in Babylon as in Jerusalem, and could be worshipped without temple or

sacrifice or ritual. The spiritualizing of religion had therefore begun.

There remained to be learned one of the deepest lessons which life holds and one which religion only can teach. A prophet voices it in language which has never been surpassed in grandeur or beauty. He first portrays the majesty of Jehovah, the Creator of the universe, the one who measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, who weighs the mountains in scales, who calls the stars by name, who regards the nations as the small dust of the balance (Isa. 40). Over against this overpowering majesty he raises a question which formulates the age-long cry of the human heart, which looks up and says, "Behold, God is great and can do all things, but see what desolations he hath wrought in the earth." "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from Jehovah and the justice due to me is passed away from my God?" (Isa. 40:27).

The question of suffering is raised and finds its only solution in the recognition of its redemptive quality. Israel as a nation learned that she was destined to be Jehovah's Servant and that Jehovah's Servant is a sufferer. We follow the prophet as he walks along this transcendent highway of thought, and as we follow we behold the many left behind, as though the truth were too sublime for all to attain; a smaller group comes into view, and finally in the distance we seem almost to discern a Figure walking alone in awful isolation, personalizing this august redemptive fact. Thus with the pigment of a nation's anguish was painted an ideal which remained unrealized until the Supreme Servant made it a reality and on Calvary showed the redemptive power of vicarious suffering. As we go back and gather up the spiritual

results of the Captivity, we cannot feel that it is an exaggeration to say, "For the history of religion there is perhaps no other period in the history of the people of Israel of equal importance and significance with the half century of the Babylonian Exile."*

The lapse of fifty years saw a new generation spring up whose affection for Babylon was far warmer than for the land which they knew only through the patriotism of their fathers. When the Persian Empire overthrew the Babylonian and came into power in 537 B.C., the captivity was terminated and the opportunity was given for as many Jews as desired to return to Palestine. The easy and prosperous life in Babylon had dimmed the ardor and quenched the patriotism of the majority, but there existed then, as there always has, a remnant of faithful and devout souls to whom religion was greater than personal interest, and these became the "holy seed," the stock out of which was built a new Jewish state, whose foundation was laid in religion.

The exact number of those who returned is a matter of minor importance. Interest centers around the new community in Jerusalem and the beginning of the construction of a temple. Enthusiasm which at first ran high (Ezra 4:1–24), was chilled by the intense opposition which the Jews brought about by their refusal to allow the mixed race that had been in possession of the land for over a century to assist in the enterprise. (It will be seen that this mixed race originated from the colonists who were sent by Assyria to populate the northern kingdom of Israel, in place of the Hebrews who were taken into captivity (II Kings 17:24-33). These aliens inter-

* Cornill, History of the People of Israel, pp. 147–148.

married with the few Hebrews who had been left behind, and from this mingling of foreign blood with Hebrew sprang the people knows as the Samaritans. The animosity which the Jews felt for them in these early days and which continued down through the time of Jesus, came largely from this mixture of race.)

Twenty years passed before the temple was completed, years marked by spiritual declension, which called out the activity of Haggai and Zechariah, who summoned the people to the completion of the task which they had begun. Sixty years later Ezra heads another migration and begins a work of reformation, introducing into the religious life a new element which has an important bearing upon the future. Ezra was a priest, yet it is not as a priest that he is remembered, but as a scribe (Ezra 7:1–6, 10). He was the first representative of the class which occupies such a conspicuous place in the days of Jesus.

During the years of residence in Babylon the Hebrews had been in contact with a literary people. Public libraries were plentiful and books written on clay tablets and in some cases upon papyrus were accessible to all who could use them. In such an atmosphere, and with a burning zeal to preserve the history and customs of their fathers, it was natural that the literary activity of the Hebrews should have been greatly stimulated. Those years were probably the ones which saw the collecting and compiling of those portions of their history which were already in writing. But however this may be, when Ezra comes to Jerusalem he comes with the "law of his God in his hand," and from this time on the interpretation of a written code and the observances of prescribed forms of worship became the dominating in-

terest in religion. We find strong emphasis falling upon ritual. An elaborate system of ceremonial observance was introduced into the worship of the new temple. In this we may perhaps see a certain reaction from the non-ritualistic worship in Babylon, as well as a desire to hold the people together through a common expression of worship which laid hold upon the imagination as well as upon the feeling of a newborn patriotism. Reactions of all kinds hold an element of danger in them, and the danger which lurked in this excessive formalism grew steadily greater through the centuries, until it smothered the new and larger life which had come to the birth in the dark days of national disaster. Here, then, is to be seen the beginning of those tendencies which developed through five centuries and finally became the habits and customs of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus.

From the days of Ezra, the work of interpreting a written law necessitated a professional class which could devote itself exclusively to this task; thus there arose the order of the scribes. In the post-exilic period, the High Priest exercised both a political and religious function, with the Temple as the medium. The scribes, on the other hand, were the teachers, with the synagogue as their schoolroom. Just when this institution really began we do not know with definiteness, but its roots undoubtedly go back to the Exile, when small groups of faithful souls met together to keep alive through common prayer and worship the faith of Israel. In New Testament days the synagogue had become the most powerful religious force in Jewish life. Out of the tendencies which began in Ezra's reformation the religion known as Judaism arose—that religion in which our Lord himself was nurtured.

Lying between the days of Ezra, which fall in the Persian period, and those of the New Testament, which belong to the Roman, is another period which does not find a record in scripture, but which had a larger influence over the life and thought of the Jewish people than almost any other. It is the period known as the Greek, or Hellenic, beginning with Alexander's conquest in 333 B. C. and lasting until 142 B. C., when the Jews once more regained political freedom for about eighty years before the Roman domination began. Space will permit of only a brief mention of the most important events of this period.

When the Persian Empire passed off the map of history by the victory of Alexander over Darius in 333 B.C., the great conqueror began his conquest of the world. His colossal achievements were disintegrated at his death by the division of his empire, but there remained something which changing political conditions had no power to efface—the spirit of Hellenism. There began the conquest of the human spirit by the Hellenic which went on silently and persistently throughout the centuries.

The two books of Maccabees give us a glimpse of conditions in Jerusalem about a hundred and seventy-five years before Christ. We see that even the Jewish people did not escape the powerful appeal of Hellenism; it was permeating society and had numbered among its sympathizers the priesthood itself. The line of cleavage became clearly marked, sides were taken, and intense antagonisms were aroused. The crisis came in 175 B.C., when the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, who was the political ruler of Palestine and so ardent a Hellenist as to be unbridled in his fanatic zeal, endeavored to destroy the Jewish religion and compel the Jews to

become Hellenists, not only in manners and customs but in religion as well, by renouncing Jehovah and worshipping the Olympian Zeus. The smouldering fire of race loyalty and religious zeal burst first into a small flame, which in the end became a consuming fire. "Thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece!" might have been the rallying cry of Jewish patriots as they flocked to the standard raised by the family of the Maccabees.

These heroic days when men fought for country and for religion and won in the conflict are known as the Maccabean age, a name which comes from the forceful personality of the greatest of its sons, Judas Maccabeus. Out of this conflict many political, social, and religious tendencies started. We cannot do more than mention those which have the most important bearing upon New Testament times.

1. Political independence was won in 142 B.C. under the leadership of Simon, one of the sons of the Maccabean house, and continued until 63 B.C., when Pompey reduced Palestine again to a tributary position and Rome made the first of the Herodian family, Herod Antipater, her administrator.

2. Social conditions.

In spite of the resistance which Judaism made against the advancing tide of Hellenism, the two forces met and mingled in ways far deeper than outward appearances would indicate, and thus worked out a Divine purpose in preparation for the larger world which was to come forth out of the old. The Greek language had become the common tongue, not only of society, but of business as well, bringing Greek literature and the culture it afforded within the reach of any who cared to

obtain it. The language of culture came to be also the language of religion, for the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek, the translation bearing the name of the Septuagint Version. This had a two-fold influence; first upon the Greek world itself by making the Hebrew religion familiar to people who had no connection with Judaism and thus preparing the way for the work of the apostles in the days when Christianity came into the current of the world's life. Second, the effect of the Septuagint version is seen in the New Testament, for this version was the Bible of the early church, and the writers of the New Testament quote from it instead of from the original Hebrew.

3. Religious tendencies.

These tendencies may best be summed up in the lines of cleavage which finally differentiated the two great religious parties, the Pharisees and Sadducees. They came into being as the result of the conditions which produced the Maccabean struggle, although they did not bear these distinctive names until between 133 and 105 B.C. The Pharisees grew out of a small group of ardent men known as the party of the "Pious." They were intense in their patriotism and zealous defenders of the faith. They naturally allied themselves with the fight for the inviolability of Judaism under the Maccabees, and were always the antagonists of Hellenism. They were by training and interest the religious party. To them was attached the order of the scribes, the professional interpreters of the Law. So thoroughly were the Pharisees the official representatives of the Jewish religion that they have been called, "the personalized genius of Judaism."

The Sadducees, on the other hand, represent a different

temper. They grew out of a class which was strongly attracted to Hellenism and threw the weight of their influence on the side of the Hellenistic spirit in all things. They were a political force rather than a religious one, and were always to be found on the side of expediency. This party held the priesthood, and were the real rulers of the people in the time of Jesus, taking good care then, as always, to be on the side of the political power, playing into its hands whenever their worldly interests were at stake.

Not only did the Maccabean period start tendencies which finally crystallized into great forces, such as the two parties already mentioned, but out of it came new hopes and beliefs which were shared by the people generally.

Between the literature which is comprised in the Old Testament and that which forms the New, there lies a large and important group of Hebrew writings which were long neglected, but are now recognized as holding an important historical relation to the New Testament in the development of religious thought which characterized the century and a half before Christ—the writings known as the Apocrypha. These writings reflect the changing religious conceptions which gradually came to be a part of the later thought of Judaism. Thus this literature is the bridge which connects the Old Testament with the New, in that it provides us with the material which enables us to trace the influences which largely colored the religious thought in the time of Jesus.

THE MESSIANIC HOPE OF ISRAEL.

Our survey of Israel's religious history would be incomplete and lacking both in cohesion and in significance if it did not include some reference to the dominating element in its religious faith, which differentiated Israel from other people and gave to the nation its peculiar place in the religious history of the world.

This distinguishing characteristic was the Messianic Hope, which persisted through all changes, even national disaster itself, taking on new forms from generation to generation, but never disappearing from the life of Israel. There is no greater illustration of the power of idealism linked with a national religious self-consciousness which could point its sons to the future in expectancy and confidence than this glorious hope of the ancient Hebrews.

We find the Messianic idea taking definite shape in the days of David (2 Sam. 7). From his day on, the nation might be personified and painted as a man with his hand over his eyes, looking forward. To the Hebrew the golden age was always ahead. "My expectation is from God," might be the motto written under our portrait of the personalized Israel.

The form which this hope took grew out of their own national life and the peculiar relation of the nation to Jehovah their King. So we find the ideal of the future expressed in the terms of a kingdom, whose ruler was Messiah, i.e. Jehovah's anointed. Its human type was their hero-king. It is David's throne and David's house and David's seed (Isa. 11:1–5; 9:6–7; Jer. 33:15–17).

The old idea of theocracy is present, for the king is Jehovah's representative, exercising justice and righteousness in the earth, reigning over a free and glorious Israel.

Isaiah sees the nations flowing into the holy city to learn of Jehovah's people; he sees the peace of nations and the quiet life of field and vineyard taking the place of war and bloodshed (Isa. 2:2–4). When Jerusalem was burned with fire and its sons carried to a strange land, the voice of their prophets still spoke of the future and bade them hope. "Hear the word of Jehovah, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off and say, 'He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock. For Jehovah hath ransomed Jacob and redeemed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. And they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow unto the goodness of Jehovah, to the grain, and to the new wine and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and old together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness,' saith Jehovah" (Jer. 31:10–14).

The same tender and reassuring message is found many times in Jeremiah, and also in Ezekiel, who lived among the captives in Babylon and cheered them with words of assurance. When the years of suffering and discipline were over, those years out of which a deeper knowledge of Jehovah had come, and a remnant was

again in the old land, a prophet once more pictures the ideal conditions of that future which is to be,—a city full of truth and holiness, where old age dwells secure and happy and youth romps in glee, unafraid in the city streets. The rights of all are safe-guarded, because God is dwelling in their midst, the welcome friend and acknowledged Sovereign (Zech. 8:1–8). Thus we find in succeeding centuries many and diverse features entering into this national hope, and yet the main elements remained unchanged. The Kingdom of God, as conceived by the prophets of Israel, was always a social thing, rooted in a national religious ideal.

There is here the same distinction to be seen between prophet and people as divided them in their respective conceptions of God; for the prophets saw the spiritual and ethical outlines of the coming Kingdom, while the mass of the people could only feel the thrill of nationalism and respond to the more earthly and temporal side. As the centuries rolled on and a new national life was established once more on the soil of Palestine after the Captivity, and the interpretation of a code of written laws took the place of the living voice of the prophet, the Messianic hope became more speculative and less vital, more theoretical and less religious.

During the fierce struggle for national and religious freedom which was waged under the Maccabees, it was not strange that this hope became largely identified with deliverance from oppression and foreign domination. The belief that Jehovah would deliver and exalt his people and punish their enemies, tended to increase the political content of Messianic expectations and introduce a revolutionary element, which lasted throughout New Testament times, especially among the masses.

As the hatred of Rome increased, the revolutionary Messianism likewise increased in violence, until finally the climax was reached when the Jewish war broke out in 66 A.D., resulting in the fall of Jerusalem four years later.

There was another phase, however, which grew out of the Maccabean period and developed steadily in the century and a half before Christ, and this was the scholastic, represented by the Pharisees: speculation and discussion formed the chief interest of this class. The old prophetic idealism of the prophets, which was intensely and simply religious, was more or less superseded by a new school of thought which produced a literature known as apocalyptic. In this literature the simplicity of the prophetic teaching became lost in a complexity of imagery and symbol, in which figurative garments, the old Messianic hope became clothed, and into its interpretation came a large element of speculation. The Kingdom was to come in a sudden, spectacular manner, accompanied by terrible convulsions of nature and the punishment of the oppressors of Jehovah's people. The long expected Kingdom would be given by Jehovah himself to his people, and was to be waited for with patience until it should arrive. Throughout this literature there is a varied, rather than a consistent, development of the doctrine of the Messiah.

It will be seen that between the revolutionary Messianic conception of the masses and the speculative interest of the Pharisees there was little in common in the way they defined their expectations, yet each cherished the faith of their fathers and looked for the day when Jehovah would visit and redeem his people and make

them again a blessing in the earth, with Jerusalem as the religious center of the world.

The opening pages of the New Testament bring us into another company, different from the two we have been considering. We are shown a small and quiet group of simple men and women who, untouched by the violence of the masses and removed from the academic interests of the religious leaders, were filled with spiritual longings which were fed by constant meditation upon the prophets: these held the great Hope religiously. To this small company the family and kinsfolk of Jesus belonged, with hearts uncorrupted by antagonisms and unspoiled by resentments—receptive, devout, expectant. To one among them,

> "Who with sweet thanksgiving
> Took in tranquillity what God might bring,
> Blessed him and waited, and within her living
> Felt the arousal of a Holy Thing,"

came the message which Jewish maidens for centuries had hoped to hear. "Thou shalt bring forth a son. . . . and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his Kingdom there shall be no end."

The Christian church is more than a book. Jesus was more than a word. Jesus, the Logos, the Word, was the Life; and the church is a living society, a living fellowship. There is something sublime in such a fellowship that passes through the ages in a living tradition. . . . Christianity is an uninterrupted life.—*Casper René Gregory.*

INTRODUCTION.

I. Sources.

The three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, contain the sources for our study. They are known as the "synoptic gospels," because they are closely related to each other not only in structure but in material. The word "synoptic" comes from the Greek word "synoptikos," which means a "together view." The Fourth gospel does not belong to the synoptic group, as it differs from them in structure, in material, and in purpose. In view of this difference it will not be drawn upon for our present study, save in a few cases where it throws light upon the synoptic record.

The careful reading of the gospel of Matthew shows a peculiarity of structure in the way the material is used without regard to the order of events. There is evidence of the grouping of discourses, miracles, and parables, as for example: the Sermon on the Mount (5–7), the miracles recorded in 8:—9:7, and the parabolic teaching recorded in chapter 13.

The comparison of Matthew with Luke shows resemblances and many differences. Luke has a large quantity of material peculiar to itself, as the history of John the Baptist, the songs of Mary and Zacharias, those parables so full of human need and divine compassion, of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. To Luke we are also indebted for the two parables of Jesus portraying such different possibilities in human nature as the Good Samaritan and the Rich Man (10:25-37; 12:13-21).

It is Luke who paints the picture of the woman in the house of the Pharisee pouring out her penitence in tears at the feet of Jesus, and gives the words of divine forgiveness which fall from his lips (7: 36–50). To these might be added many other examples of the use of a source from which Luke drew largely in the writing of his gospel.

When we turn to Mark, we are impressed with its brevity and simplicity; with its rapidity of movement and its vivid descriptions. We are made to see scenes, rather than to listen to words. The often recurring words "straightway" and "authority" arrest our attention at the beginning, and impress us with the virility of the life they describe.

A careful comparison of Matthew and Luke with Mark has revealed the existence of an organic relation to Mark. This discovery has been made by a comparison of words, phrases, sentences, and whole paragraphs, with the result that Mark is found to be the structural foundation of the other two. Nearly the whole of Mark is to be found word for word in Matthew and Luke.

An interesting test of this can be made by any student who will take the necessary time and trouble to verify this statement for himself. Provide yourself with a red crayon and a harmony of the gospels. Carefully underline in red in Matthew and Luke the words and phrases of Mark which occur, and note the result as a piece of interesting evidence of what now forms a conviction of New Testament scholars,—that Mark is the earliest gospel and the most important source from which the other two have drawn. This discovery invests Mark with a new interest for us, as it means that in this gospel we have the earliest record of the life of our Lord

and the way the events of his life were first proclaimed in the early apostolic preaching in Palestine. Because of this primary and basic relation of Mark to the other records of Jesus' life, we have taken it for the starting point and groundwork of our study.

II. Authorship and Date.

The thought is rather startling at first that none of the gospels is signed by its writer. The question of authorship is one which must be arrived at from a study of the records of the early Christian society. However, all feeling of insecurity, arising from this fact, is removed when we face the antiquity and persistence of the early Christian traditions which take us back to the close of the first century and the opening of the second. The links between the two are living persons who pass on to the generation following their knowledge of the Christian traditions and customs of their time. Much of this has come down to us in letters and treatises in which are to be found many references to our gospels and voluminous quotations from them, showing that these gospels were in circulation and regarded as sacred writings as early as the beginning of the second century. An example of the value of these living witnesses may be seen in the history of Polycarp. Polycarp was born about 69 A.D. in Asia Minor; he became a Christian bishop, and was martyred in 155 A.D. Another bishop in Asia Minor, Irenaeus, speaks of having seen Polycarp when he himself was a boy and says that Polycarp was a pupil of John, the beloved disciple,—thus Polycarp is a direct link between the apostolic and post-apostolic ages. Irenaeus died in 202 A.D. and through him, who knew Polycarp, who knew John, the third century is linked to the first.

But what did Polycarp know about our gospels? In a letter that he wrote to the Philippians (the same church to which Paul had written), there are quotations from the New Testament in such abundance as to show that Polycarp had in his possession probably the four gospels, besides Paul's letters and the First Epistles of Peter and John. This was before the middle of the second century.

The authorship of the four gospels is a continuous tradition,—they were never associated with any other names than the ones they bear, and by the middle of the second century they had taken on a sacred character.

An important reference is made to the gospel of Mark in the writings of Papias. Papias became bishop of Hieropolis in Asia Minor and lived until about the middle of the second century, 150–160 A.D. He is called by Eusebius "an ancient man," which suggests that he was born before the close of the first century, which would link him to the apostolic age. He wrote a book in five parts called "Explanations of the Lord's Sayings."

Eusebius, who was the first church historian, quotes the following from Papias: "This also the Presbyter said, 'Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said and done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterwards, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses. So that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them, for he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard and not to state any of them falsely.' "

This is interesting and important, not merely because this gospel is attributed to Mark, but chiefly because it is connected with Peter and probably reflects his preaching. There are various evidences in it of such first-hand knowledge of persons, places, and events, as Peter would naturally have. Its date may be placed very confidently between 65 and 68 A.D.

III. Outline.

The outline of Mark is very simple, falling into two main divisions and two smaller ones.

The first division is from 1–7:23, which gives a rapid survey of the ministry in Galilee, the period of popular response, and of growing hostility on the part of the religious leaders.

The second division is from 7:24–10, containing the record of the withdrawal of Jesus for a time outside of Galilee, with the evident purpose of teaching his disciples; the confession of his Messiahship by Peter; and the transfiguration.

The third division is from 11–15, giving in brief detail the events of the last week in Jerusalem, culminating in the crucifixion.

The fourth division is but a fragment of a chapter, the sixteenth, containing the shortest statement of the resurrection. There is value in memorizing these divisions in order to be able to think through the book with the contents well in mind.

It is very important to know many things about the gospels, such as their literary structure, their dates and authorship, the problems arising out of their interdependence and their striking individuality, all of which is available in books which reverent scholarship has placed

at our disposal. But it is to be remembered that there is more in the gospels than the narration of facts, important as the facts are: there is supremely the unfolding of a Mind, the revelation of a Person; this is the "sacrament of the gospels," reserved for those who have eyes to see "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." To this sacrament all are bidden who with lowly, humble, and obedient hearts are willing to be his disciples and learn from him the meaning of discipleship.

STUDY I

THE HERALD OF THE MESSIAH

"John, than which man a sadder or a greater
Not till this day has been of woman born:
John, like some lonely peak by the Creator
Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn."

—*F. W. H. Myers.*

STUDY I—THE HERALD OF THE MESSIAH.

I. Introductory Words.

1. Contrast the opening words of the gospel of Mark with those of Matthew and Luke. Observe the directness with which Mark moves to the heart of his narrative: "The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Notice to what the attention is directed. What does this suggest that the essence of the gospel really is?

The early use of the term "gospel," or "glad tidings," was connected with Jesus himself—the good news he brought, which was inseparable from his own Person. It was the second century before the term "gospels," was applied to the documents which contain the record of our Lord's life and teaching.

Notice the combination of the two names, the personal and the official—Jesus Christ. Jesus was our Lord's personal name; Christ, or the Christ, was an official term in current use among the Jews of Jesus' day to designate the Messiah. It means literally "the anointed one." In the Old Testament it is used of various people and indicates one who is chosen of Jehovah for some special service: for example, the king was "Jehovah's anointed" (I. Sam. 24: 6). Even Cyrus, the Persian monarch, is spoken of in this way (Isa. 45: 1). In Psalm 2 "Jehovah's anointed" is represented as associated with him in universal sovereignty. The Greek term ὁ χριστός, the Christ, in the synoptic gospels always means the Messiah.

When Peter says, "Thou art the Christ" (Mark 8:29), he confesses his belief in the Messiahship of Jesus.

It is to be remembered that this is the theme of the first preaching after the resurrection (Acts 2:36, 3:18). The crucified Jesus is God's Messiah. After Paul had taken the message of the living and reigning Lord out into the Roman world and Gentile disciples were won to allegiance, the name Christ, which had been limited to one race and stood for sovereignty over one people, took on a new and deeper meaning. Christ became the name which stood for a universal spiritual sovereignty. The Jewish Messiah became the world's Sovereign. The way Paul uses the name Christ in his letters points to this transformed spiritual idea. Phil. 3:8 and Rom. 8:39 may be taken as examples. Mark, in his opening sentence, uses it in this larger significance. In the name, Jesus Christ the Lord, the church of the first century confessed its faith. In this same name we of the twentieth century confess ours.

2. The relation between a new event and an ancient message (Mark 1:2–3).

Read the passages in the Old Testament from which these words have been taken and observe the context. Is this one quotation or two woven together? How do you account for the use of the name Isaiah in connection with the whole quotation? What is filling the mind of Mark as he uses this old Scripture to introduce the first character who meets us on the pages of the New Testament? Is there any correspondence between the coming of this new prophet, and the time when this old proclamation first fell upon the ears of a bewildered people? Read Isa. 40:1–5.

Go back five centuries in Jewish history and recall the long years of captivity in a strange land, the disappointed longings of that first generation of captives who hoped against hope that their eyes could once again look upon their native land before they were gathered to their fathers. To their children they passed on the legacy of their hope. One day a prophet hears a voice calling him to utter a message from Jehovah. It is a message of comfort and of expectation; it contains the assurance that their God is about to reveal himself in a new and wonderful way. It is a call to prepare, to be ready, for the divine unveiling is near; the valleys are to be exalted, the mountains and hills are to be made low, the glory of Jehovah is to be revealed, and all flesh is to see it together. The old land is to belong to them once more, but the gift holds more than the soil, it holds a new understanding of the loving-kindness of their God.

Mark has in mind another voice, proclaiming the dawn of a new day, the day long waited for in Israel, the day which should usher in the Kingdom of God and bring with it a new unveiling of him. But the people are not ready, a highway must be prepared for his advent feet. Great experiences of God are granted only to those who are ready.

II. John, the son of Zacharias.

Notice the seemingly abrupt way in which he is introduced. "John came." But it is a natural transition from the previous words, for John has been in the background of the writer's mind all along. It is John who becomes the link between the living present and the

distant past, for in his voice the divine summons is heard again, "Repent ye." "Get ready." "For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." God is about to do some new and wonderful thing and you are not ready!

1. The character and qualifications of John.

Acquaint yourself with the history of John's parentage and the circumstances of his birth as given by Luke (1:5–80).

What influence did John's home have in the development of his character?

What suggestion is contained in the statement which we find in Luke 1:80?

What "desert" is referred to? How far was it from John's home? What was he probably doing during the years which lie back of his public work?

Name some of the elements which are necessary for moral and spiritual leadership. How many of these do you find in John?

What does John's garb suggest as to his own feeling about his work?

What idea is contained in the striking words of Old Testament flavor found in Luke 3:2?

What is the difference between a mission and an occupation? Which do you think John felt his work to be?

Draw a mental picture of this man. "No sleek scribe, no pompous priest, no courtier clad in soft raiment was he; but a son of the desert, clad in garments of coarse camel's hair, bound round him by a leathern girdle, seeking his food from the rock where the wild bee left its honey and the locust came—a man full of the stern

spirit of solitude and the thoughts God speaks to the soul that can dare to be alone."*

Feel the strength of the conviction which is consuming him as he steps out of the seclusion of his private life and takes his place as the herald of the new era.

*Studies in the Life of Christ, Fairbairn, p. 65.

STUDY II

JOHN'S MESSAGE TO ISRAEL

John brought back into the religious life of Judaism the conception of a living God, who spoke and worked in the present. He insisted once more on the supremacy of the moral law, and on the need for practical repentance. He taught men to realize that God reveals himself through personalities, not through bodies of tradition and priestly systems.—*E. F. Scott.*

STUDY II—JOHN'S MESSAGE TO ISRAEL.

I. The Keynote of His Message.

Compare carefully Matthew 3: 1–12 with Luke 3: 1–17.

Interpret the word which is the keynote of John's message. What does he mean by repentance?

Consider the effect upon the people of John's sudden appearance among them and his startling announcement. What reminder must this have been of days long since past, when prophets were a part of the usual religious life? What do you think was the first impression which this unexpected prophet made upon his countrymen?

Was God as real a Presence in the life of the nation at this time as in the olden days?

Is there something real and imminent in the proclamation, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"? Observe the ready response of the people (Matt. 3: 5–6).

What was associated with the Kingdom in the Jewish mind? Had this anything to do with the wide and swift response which the people gave to John?

Was baptism a new ceremony? What meaning was attached to it?

Read Zechariah 13: 1, which may have been in John's mind as a background for his baptism.

Confession of sin accompanied the act; it was a baptism unto repentance. National confession of sin was common, personal confession was more rare. Which was this?

II. John's Social Teaching.

Notice the different groups of people John addressed and how he applied his teaching to their various needs. What did he have to say to:

1. The professional religious class (Matt. 3: 7–9).

How would John, with his simple life and vital religion, be likely to regard the official custodians of religion? John's figures are full of vitality. He has been used to the open life of nature. He has often seen the little vipers hidden away in the field suddenly becoming active as soon as the stubble is set on fire, fleeing before the smoke and heat. Read in these words his feeling about the Pharisees and Sadducees, and notice how well he understands the uppermost thought in their minds, as he warns them against their feeling of security in the words, "Think not to say, 'We have Abraham to our father.'" One thing only will stand the test in the coming kingdom—reality.

2. The multitude (Luke 3: 10–11). Their sense of insecurity is expressed in the question, "What then must we do?" What does John emphasize in his answer?

3. The publican class (Luke 3: 12–13), the farmers of the Roman taxes. They also ask, "What must we do?" Notice how John puts his finger on their besetting sin.

4. Men in military service, the soldiers (Luke 3: 14), came with their question, "And we, what must we do?" What answer do they get?

Do not fail to see the ethical and social interpretation which John makes of his summons to repentance. Again consider the meaning which he puts into the word.

III. The Messianic Element in John's Message to Israel.

Mark 1:7–8; Matt. 3:10–12; Luke 3:15–17.

John's preaching, especially his announcement of the nearness of the Kingdom, aroused the latent Messianic expectations of the people. Luke tells us (3:15) that many were eagerly inquiring if John himself were the Messiah. Notice the way he speaks of his own work and the recognition he has of its preliminary importance. "After me cometh one mightier than I."

The work he assigns to the Messiah is indicative of his conception of the Kingdom.

Study his figures and notice how vividly they express what is in his mind:—an axe lying at the root of the trees, the chaff which the fan has separated from the wheat destroyed by a consuming fire. The Messiah, in John's mind, will come with a baptism of judgment upon an unprepared and guilty nation.

He thinks and speaks in Old Testament language. One almost hears again the words of Joel (1:15; 2:1–3).

With this in mind read Matt. 11:2–6. What was it that was troubling John?

Notice in Jesus' reply his understanding of the difficulty. Does he imply that John's Messianic ideal must be changed? What had John left out of his conception?

Are there some things which we leave out of our ideas of God and his purposes which are necessary for a right understanding of him? We need repeatedly to revise our conceptions of life and religion by bringing them into the presence of Jesus and looking at them through the lens of his life and teaching.

IV. Jesus' estimate of John.

Matt. 11:7–14.

Feel in these words the desire of Jesus to shield his heroic herald from appearing to be what he was not—the prey of weakness and indecision. His mistaken idea about the nature of Jesus' work did not make him less honorable in the eyes of the Christ.

Observe the way in which Jesus speaks of him and feel the strength and dignity with which he invests him. These implications are couched in the form of questions which have John as their subject. What did you expect to find in John? An ordinary man, resembling the familiar reed which rocks before each breath of wind—an everyday occurrence? A man of worldly prominence, conspicuous because of the externals of adornment? Or did you go out to see a man great in the spiritual realm? You saw that and even more—you saw the Messiah's messenger.

There is but one greater than he—the smallest and weakest member of the Kingdom, because greater is he who belongs to the new era, which is inaugurated, than the one who announces its advent. With John the old order ended; with Jesus the new began.

John is the only person our Lord ever eulogized. Did Jesus see in him and his work more than John himself saw? Is there not an implication here of the difference between the divine and human estimate of men and the service they render? Many of earth's seeming failures are true achievements in the eyes of him who sees the whole.

> "All I could never be,
> All men ignored in me,
> This was I worth to God;
> Whose wheel the pitcher shaped."
>
> *Browning.*

The man who called out from Jesus such words of appreciation must have been a joy to him during his short earthly life and a comfort to remember after he had passed into the life beyond.

STUDY III

THE FIRST DISCLOSURE OF THE MIND OF JESUS

In the shop of Nazareth
Pungent cedar haunts the breath.
'Tis a low Eastern room,
Windowless, touched with gloom.
Workman's bench and simple tools
Line the walls. Chests and stools,
  Yoke of ox, and shaft of plow,
Finished by the Carpenter,
  Lie about the pavement now.
In the room the Craftsman stands,
Stands and reaches out His hands.

That evening, when the Carpenter swept out
  The fragrant shavings from the workshop floor,
And placed the tools in order, and shut to
  And barred for the last time the humble door,
And going on His way to save the world,
  Turned from the labourer's lot forevermore,
    I wonder was He glad?

That morning, when the Carpenter walked forth
  From Joseph's cottage, in the glimmering light,
And bade His holy mother long farewell;
  And through the skies of dawn, all pearly bright,
Saw glooming the dark shadow of a cross,
  Yet seeing, set His feet towards Calvary's height,
    I wonder was He sad?

Ah! when the Carpenter went on His way
  He thought not for Himself of good or ill.
His path was one through shop or thronging men,
  Craving His help, e'en to the cross-crowned hill,
In toiling, healing, loving, suffering—all
  His joy and life to do His Father's will,
    And earth and heaven are glad.

—A. P. Vaughn.

STUDY III—THE FIRST DISCLOSURE OF THE MIND OF JESUS.

Mark 1: 9–11; Matt. 3: 13–17; Luke 3: 21–22.

I. Jesus at the Jordan Requesting Baptism of John.

This scene stands at the threshold of the public life of our Lord and marks the transition from the secluded years of quiet personal living to those brief and crowded ones of public ministry which changed the history of the world. In imagination we have often followed Jesus from his home in the little village of Nazareth, hidden by the hills of lower Galilee, and watched him close the door of the carpenter shop behind him and turn his face toward the south, where crowds were gathering around the wilderness prophet and receiving the solemn rite of baptism from his hands. Matthew draws our attention to the element of purpose in the heart of Jesus as he starts on his journey to join that large company of his brethren, and, by his presence with them, show his sympathy with the new moral life which is stirring in the nation.

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John to be baptized of him." Matt. 3: 13. It was his settled purpose not only to sympathize with but to participate in the rite itself. We stand bewildered before what seems to us an incomprehensible act, as we behold Jesus receiving the same rite which was being administered to other men. Our bewilderment arises

from the knowledge that he is not like other men. This feeling of ours is expressed by the Baptist himself in his remonstrance. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"

The more we feel the moral grandeur of Jesus, the more we see how solitary he is in the incomparable majesty of his character, the more difficult is it for us to understand this initial act in his public career.

Compare the three accounts, observing the variations. In what particulars do they vary? In what are they alike?

How much light does Luke's brief summary of Jesus' boyhood and the one picture he gives of his presence in the temple as a lad of twelve, throw upon those years which lie behind his appearance at the Jordan? Luke 2: 40–52.

Can you find two words which will be large enough to describe this period? Is there anything in the record which suggests the abnormal?

What response would John's ethical teaching find in Jesus as he heard echoes of it in his Galilean home?

Did it occur to him that he would go to John's aid? Had he done so, would his presence at the Jordan have seemed at all incongruous? Where, then, to us, does the incongruity lie?

Do you think John knew Jesus before he came to the Jordan?

II. The Reason Jesus Gives in Answer to John's Hesitation.

Matt. 3: 15.

Does this afford any clue to what was in Jesus' mind? Can you get behind the words and feel the weight of

obligation which they imply? "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Study the word "becometh" and the word "righteousness." Does the former hold the sense of fitness? Does the adverb "all" suggest that righteousness in its wholeness has not yet been realized?

Think about the use of words, how rich or how meager they are, depending upon the content which the person using them is able to put into them. Righteousness is a word which seems to draw John and Jesus together.

John was consumed with a passion for righteousness: notice how Jesus recognized this in the statement he made about John's work. Matt. 21:32. But was John's conception of righteousness the same as Jesus'? How would you express the difference? Does this word, then, separate the two, as at first it seems to unite them?

Is righteousness something more than justice? If so, what more is to be added? In view of your study of the word, consider again the reply to Jesus, "It becometh us to fulfil *all* righteousness."

Which consciousness did Jesus bring with him to the banks of the Jordan, the consciousness of Sonship or of Messiahship? Think over this carefully. Which was fundamental? Did the one become merged into the other in the baptismal experience?

Jesus' conscious relation to God as his Father held in it a profound sense of obligation to men.

III. The External Aspects of the Baptism.

Note the words which are used to describe the event.

What are words in their essence? Can they ever describe accurately any event which transcends the limitation of language? What is needed to interpret language?

Think over the following statement and test it by your own experience. "Facts never tell the truth to an unimaginative mind. There is a higher form of accuracy and a deeper presentation of reality than a bare statement. Figures and prose taken alone are blind guides."*

From whom, probably, did the account of the baptism originally come?

IV. The Baptism in the Experience of Jesus.

Notice, in the narrative, how close together the external and the internal are.

We have yet to learn what was perfectly clear to the Hebrew mind, the relation of the thing seen to that which is unseen, of the visible to the invisible, the symbol to the reality.

The important element in the baptism of Jesus lies in what it meant to him. It was a great spiritual experience to the soul of the Christ. His life was not marked by visions. Only twice was there any lifting of veils for him—this time at the beginning of his work, and once again near its close. Jesus lived by faith in the unseen, as do we who follow him. It was fitting that "the heavens were opened unto him," as he stood at the portal of his supreme dedication.

His sense of responsibility becomes now articulate. He sees, he hears, and however much or little he may have realized of his Messiahship before this experience, the convincing fact is that the full certainty of it becomes his as he emerges from the baptismal waters.

Notice carefully the words which he hears: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."

The life of Jesus had been nourished by the sacred

* The Sixth Sense, p. 62, Brent.

scriptures of his people. They were a part of his very being. In the Voice which he hears, two Old Testament ideals become blended, ideals which had undoubtedly been in the mind of Jesus many times (Ps. 2: 7 and Isa. 42:1), Jehovah's anointed King, and the sublime but mysterious Servant of Jehovah so wonderfully portrayed in Isaiah 42–53.

How far apart they seem, these two, the King enthroned and reigning, the Servant obscure and suffering! Only once in all the ages did they ever meet,—that once was in the soul of Jesus, who merged them into his own Messianic ideal. He bore in his own consciousness the twofold character, the supreme Son (Matt. 11: 25–29), and the true Servant (Mark 10: 45; Luke 22: 27).

To Jesus the baptism meant his acceptance of the responsibility which his sense of sonship laid upon him, and in the experience he receives the revelation that this is Messiahship. From this time on he never sees himself apart from his mission.

V. The Significance of the Baptism as a Starting Point for the Study of the Mind of Jesus.

We see him coming to it with no feeling of separation from the people. He purposely identifies himself with his brethren, even unto a baptism which for them involves the confession of sin. In this act he clearly declares his oneness with men even to the sharing with them of their sense of guilt. Herein is a door opened into his very mind, a disclosure of what was in his heart as he approached this gathering of sin-burdened people and quietly numbered himself among them.

There is something more in the New Testament than historical facts; something more profound than its ethical teaching—there is the unfolding of a Mind. To know in even a small degree the mind of Christ is to have entered into the secret place of the Most High.

STUDY IV

A REVELATION OF SPIRITUAL CONFLICT IN THE MIND OF THE MESSIAH

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant."—*St. Paul.*

STUDY IV—A REVELATION OF SPIRITUAL CONFLICT IN THE SOUL OF THE MESSIAH.

Mark 1: 12–13; Matt. 4: 1–11; Luke 4: 1–13.

Compare carefully the three records of this experience. Notice the position given to it in the narratives.

With what is it intimately related?

Is this relation one of time merely, or is there another relation more subtle?

Consider the word Mark uses to describe the withdrawal of Jesus into the solitude of the Judean wilderness: "And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness." The word "driveth" has force in it and conveys the idea of thrusting him out.

Notice also that this action is attributed to the divine Spirit, suggesting that there is a natural spiritual continuity between the exalted experience of the open heavens, with its revelation of divine mission, and the intense, lonely struggle of the desert. The life unfolding before us is not made up of fragments or of happenings which bear no relation to each other. It is one continuous development, in harmony with its own central purpose.

Once and once only in our world has there ever been a perfectly ordered human life, and that is the life of the Supreme Son who, in loving dependence upon his Father, lived the filial life with such gladness and assurance that he could say with perfect simplicity, "I do always the things that please him."

The disordered element in our lives arises from the imperfect filial devotion which sin has created; but in spite of the repeated failures occasioned by our imperfect devotion to our Father's spirit and will, there is an undeviating guidance which is leading us toward the goal of a perfected character. There are no fragments in our lives as truly as there were none in Jesus,' for through them one continuous purpose runs, with unity as its goal.

I. The Form of the Temptation.

Read the record and endeavor to see and feel what the words are intended to convey.

Was there anyone with Jesus?

How did this experience ever become known?

In studying the gospels, notice how Jesus uses figures of speech as clothing for his thoughts. Think of the power of suggestion there is in symbols and remember how large a part of our own spiritual education has come through them.

Was the form of the temptation external, or is the external used to interpret a spiritual experience?

II. The Background of the Temptation.

Review in your mind the previous study, remembering that the consciousness of Messiahship was filling the soul of Jesus, and the sense of power with which to accomplish the work before him.

Messiahship was intimately bound up with the presence of the Kingdom of God. To know himself to be the Messiah was also to know that he was the one through whom the Kingdom was to come.

Review the brief history of the Messianic hope which

is given in the Historical Introduction, pages 15–19, and become familiar with the different phases through which this hope had passed during the centuries, and the longings and ideals which the people of Jesus' day cherished as a part of the same expectation. Jesus knew it all, the heritage of the past and the ardent desire of the present. As he came fresh from the experience of the baptism, with the mission of Messiahship deep in his heart, and clothed with power as a garment, he faced these varied conceptions of the Kingdom and they formed the background of the lonely vigil in the desert which we call "The Temptation."

"The rejection of his teaching on the part of the great mass of the people was primarily owing to the fact that the salvation whose realization he proclaimed did not correspond to the people's hopes, and to the ideal which they cherished."*

III. The Significance of the Temptation.

Scattered through the pages of the gospels we catch glimpses of frequent retirements or withdrawals of Jesus for solitude and prayer. This is the first great withdrawal, and it stands in an intimate relation to the work to which Jesus had dedicated himself in the baptismal waters. He was now in his own consciousness the one through whom God's age-long purposes were to be realized, the fulfiller of the past's growing revelation of the Divine in human history, the Messiah. Thus he was the founder of that Kingdom which conserved all that was abiding in the past and was to realize in the future all that the weary hearts of men had longingly hoped for. With this in mind, come to the study of this mo-

* Teachings of Jesus, Wendt, Vol. I., p. 57.

mentous struggle, and see if it throws light upon its primary elements.

Was it personal in the sense that our temptations are personal, beginning and ending in ourselves? Was it official in the sense of being Messianic, that is, related to the work of the Messiah? Is there a deep sense in which it is both? If so, where is the uniting point?

What question was uppermost in Jesus' mind? What feelings must have been surging through his heart? Do you see in the Temptation a drama of human life being enacted before the mental vision of the Saviour, the silent procession of the world's tragic human needs, spiritual cravings, ardent hopes? Here they all are passing before him and lifting their hands in silent supplication for relief and satisfaction. Did not the Kingdom of God hold the realization of all of these? Was not the Messiah the one who possessed the power to bring in this Kingdom and make all of its blessings available to men?

The use of power is one of the severest moral tests. Apply this to Jesus all through the history of his relations with men and observe how it reveals him.

With this in mind, formulate what to you seems to be the heart of this conflict, the thing which brings spiritual anguish and mental struggle to Jesus. This is no sham battle with imaginary enemies. It is the initial engagement of the Captain of our salvation with those titanic forces which invade human life and destroy it, those forces which represent the eternal difference between divine laws and human ideals.

IV. Analysis of the Temptation.

Bear in mind that it is one temptation in three phases. Intense mental preoccupation had entirely eliminated

the sense of hunger. Jesus was not an ascetic; we do not find him fasting as a means to spiritual exaltation. He lived his filial life exultingly in the midst of the ordinary, every-day events of human life. But this was a time when an intense pressure of mind and spirit drove all desire for food away. The reaction came, the physical asserted itself and became the film upon which larger and greater needs were photographed.

1. The first phase of temptation.

Attempt to analyze the subtlety of the suggestion which came in the guise of a legitimate human need. Think deep enough into it to feel its strain. Can you define it? Into what other elemental need did Jesus turn the entire question? Why does this hold the answer to the first? In what way does it answer the question of the nature of the Kingdom?

2. The second phase of temptation.

How would you characterize this?

Is it as subtle as the first?

What side of human nature does it take account of?

Notice the reference Paul makes to this strain in his countrymen. I Cor. 1:22.

Is there a suggestion here that citizenship in the Kingdom means a certain exemption from disaster, an inoculation against the working out of the law of cause and effect?

Ponder Jesus' reply.

Does this sort of idea trade upon the character of God and become irreverence? Is this indicated in the reply of Jesus, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"?

The power resident in Jesus was a sacred thing to him; its use imposed upon him certain moral restrictions. He

would not use methods which were spectacular to win the faith of men, neither would he claim for himself special intervention not granted to other men. If men were to be won it must be through reverence for the character of God as they saw it in him.

3. The third phase of temptation.

Luke adds a peculiarly vivid touch. "And he led him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world *in a moment of time.*"

What must have passed before the imagination of Jesus and how was this interwoven with the Kingdom ideal?

What resources did these world kingdoms represent? How were they to be won to another and higher allegiance? How was the conquest to be achieved? Was it to be by the use of means the world understands, which would gain a quick assent? Or was the Kingdom to win the world through means it does not understand but will ultimately bow before in recognition of their greatness? Was it to come quickly or slowly, visibly or invisibly?

Is God supreme in human history and his spirit triumphant in human life?

Jesus answers the question and turns his face toward men with the message of joy upon his lips, "The Kingdom of God is at hand," and with the consciousness in his heart of his supreme place in the Kingdom as Messiah —the Messiah who bears the lineaments of that mysterious and forgotten figure which for centuries waited to be incarnate in human form, the Suffering Servant of the ancient prophet.

In what ways were these temptations present during the whole life of Jesus? Listen to the reference which

he makes to the presence of temptation in his ministry (Luke 22: 28); also to the suggestive words which Luke adds at the close of the temptation narration (Luke 4: 13).

In what ways are these temptations reproduced in the life of Christian people today?

Why are they peculiarly the temptations of the sons of God?

STUDY V

THE FIRST PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM

God in Christ has created a new spiritual environment. God has come forth from His eternity and has acted creatively in history, by initiating a new spiritual world-epoch through His Son. It is this conviction that gives to the New Testament the peculiar thrill of amazement which distinguishes it from all other literature, the tremor of awe which vibrates through all its pages.—*D. S. Cairns.*

STUDY V—THE FIRST PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM.

Mark 1: 15; Luke 4: 43; Matt. 4: 23.

I. The Terms Employed.

Write out the three forms in which the Kingdom announcement occurs. Study the words which are used.

Consider the use of the word "gospel" in connection with the proclamation of the Kingdom. What does this suggest? What do you usually mean when you speak of "the gospel"? Was this Jesus' meaning? Does he put more than an individual content into the word?

Notice how Mark introduces the beginning of Jesus' preaching. "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God." This gospel is glad tidings, containing something incomparably good for men which has its origin in God. In what terms does Jesus state this gospel of God? Are you accustomed to think in these terms? What vast implications do they contain?

Compare the opening words of Jesus' proclamation with those of John. Mark supplies an interesting time element—"The time is fulfilled." There is in this a sense of the unity of the divine work, a progressive unfolding of the purpose which was incompletely realized in the past.

Notice how Jesus emphasizes John's word "repent" and adds another. In what way does the word "believe" supplement and complete repentance?

Return to the words, "The Kingdom of God is at hand." To understand what Jesus means by the Kingdom of God is to enter into his mind and share his outlook. The fact that there is no definition of the Kingdom in any of Jesus' teaching increases the difficulty in arriving at final conclusions, and always restrains us from feeling that an adequate interpretation has been reached which forbids any enlargement. On the other hand, this very absence of definition is an invitation to form conclusions based upon a study of our Lord's words, actions, and general attitude toward the Messianic expectations of his day, as well as his interpretation of the ancient scripture, and to gain a true insight into what constituted his own Kingdom ideal.

The silences of Jesus are as eloquent as his words, and his Kingdom teaching contains more material for the spiritual imagination than exact statements of specific details. One is impressed with the exceeding simplicity of Jesus' teaching and the large element of description which enters into it. His transforming touch falls upon words, beliefs, institutions, and ideals, until the old forms stand forth transfigured in a new and glowing light. The old term "Kingdom of God," which stood for the persistent ideal of the past and the fervent hope of the future, is one of the instances which illustrates this transforming work. Jesus took the old ideal of the Kingdom and made it his gospel, putting into it all he knew it was intended to hold, the realization in humanity of God's most gracious purposes, the safeguarding of man's dearest hopes. On the lips of Jesus the Kingdom was something vitally different from anything it had ever been before. It was so large in dimensions as to hold his entire work, so inclusive as to embrace every

phase of normal human interest, so heavenly as to create a new spiritual environment, so living as to burst all barriers and assume varying forms and yet remain essentially the same throughout all time.

If we can discover the fundamental elements which constituted Jesus' conception of the Kingdom, we shall have a guiding principle in its interpretation. To begin with, look through the three gospels and find the name Jesus applies to God. Does he use the term King? If so, in what connection? Is King his characteristic name for God? Take the name which you have found to be the one always on Jesus' lips and find the two correlative terms. Notice how the ancient terms of government and royalty are merged into those of family. Can you draw a figure which will serve as an illustration to the eye?

From the dear and familiar language of the family, where all of the holiest emotions and experiences are learned, Jesus draws his terms and illustrations which have vitalized religion and made it real in just those places where we seek reality for ourselves—in our relationships. It is surely not accidentally that we have been placed in human families, for

> "All fathers learn their craft from Thee,
> All loves are shadows cast
> By the beautiful eternal hills
> Of Thine unchanging past."
>
> —*Faber.*

Go back in thought to the Messianic ideal which Jesus makes his own and in it see the true insignia of royalty which he knew was inscribed on the throne of the Kingdom and which was to be the dominating characteristic of its citizens. The old passion for dominion is to be lost in the consuming desire to serve, for the Kingdom of

God is a kingdom in which service is supreme. To bring men into the filial attitude toward God and into the fraternal relation with each other; to create in them this new and glowing life beginning in their own renewed and vitalized personalities and issuing from them in sacrificial service in the world, is a more stupendous task than the winning of an empire. The Kingdom in Jesus' mind was an empire—the empire of the spirit, a new social order upon earth, in which the will of his Father should be done even as it is done in Heaven.

STUDY VI

THE FIRST PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM—Continued

Given, not lent,
And not withdrawn—once sent,
This Infant of mankind, this One,
Is still the little welcome Son.

New every year,
New born and newly dear,
He comes with tidings and a song,
The ages long, the ages long;

Even as the cold
Keen winter grows not old,
As childhood is so fresh, foreseen,
And spring in the familiar green.

Sudden as sweet
Come the expected feet.
All joy is young, and new all art,
And He, too, Whom we have by heart.

—*Alice Meynell.*

STUDY VI—THE FIRST PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM—Continued.

II. The Early Days in Galilee.

Mark 1: 16–45; Matt. 4: 18–22.

1. The beginning of discipleship.

We look back upon the beginning of Jesus' work from a vantage point of twenty centuries, supplied with an understanding of the ideals which he cherished. What would have seemed an incident then has become an event fraught with a significance which can be measured only by the results that have come from it. What more simple or natural circumstance could there have been than the calling of four men into a companionship of friendship and work? Observe the words Mark uses to express the seemingly incidental manner in which Jesus finds and calls these two pairs of brothers.

In the heart of Jesus was the vision of a kingdom, and deep in his consciousness the knowledge that he himself was the one through whom it was to be realized. His first significant act is the invitation to four men to come into the relation of discipleship with himself. The law of association was one he magnified and supremely demonstrated. Discipleship became his method of work. He took the men who finally made "the twelve," brought them into intimate fellowship with himself, making by his presence a new environment in which they lived, slowly changing their ideals, silently re-creating their

purposes, until they were ready for the liberating of mind and spirit which came later. Consider the place discipleship holds in the work of Jesus and ask yourself what place it holds in present day Christianity and in your own life as a Christian.

The calling of these first four disciples is a landmark in spiritual history, for it commemorates the beginning of the conquest of the world. What do the words, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men," suggest as to the significance which Jesus attached to discipleship?

Turn to Mark 3: 13–19 and compare with it Luke 6: 12–16 for the completion of the disciple circle. Notice how Luke mentions the night of prayer which preceded the choice of these men.

Notice also the same principle of association which has been already mentioned—"that they might be with him and that he might send them forth to preach."

Think of the apparent unfitness of these men and their latent possibilities. Consider what they became as disciples of Jesus. Make a list of their names and indicate what you know of each. This is an interesting study in temperament and the contribution each type can make to the Kingdom of God.

2. Brief sketches of work which outline the picture of the Worker. Mark 1: 21–45.

Read this section, into which is compressed so much of action and feeling. Do not be diverted from the main quest—the discovery of the elements which fashion the personality of this Master of men.

a. A Sabbath day in Capernaum.

The first mention of Capernaum, which became the home of Jesus during the years of his ministry. Matthew (4: 12–13) refers to the change of residence from Nazareth. Notice the way Capernaum is mentioned in the records.

Why do you think Jesus chose this city for his home? In what ways did it differ from Nazareth? Is there anything interpretative in this act?

(a) Synagogue ministry.

Familiarize yourself with the place the synagogue held in Jewish life. Observe how much Jesus used it, until opposition to him grew so hostile that its doors were closed to him.

What attitude toward the institutions of his time does this use of the synagogue show?

In this connection study an example of synagogue preaching which Luke gives us (4: 16–30). Compare this with Mark 6 and notice the different period in the ministry of Jesus assigned to it in Mark.

Why do you think Luke introduces his story of the ministry in Galilee with this incident?

Go back to the picture Mark is drawing in chapter I of this Sabbath day in Capernaum. What is his chief concern? Does he record anything Jesus said? What does he do?

What do you see in this brief record?

(b) In the home of disciples.

Follow the swift movement of Mark as he takes Jesus from the public gathering of the synagogue service with its surprised and awed people to the home of the two disciples where personal need was present and made its appeal to this One who had aroused such wonder from

the crowd. What do you feel in this simple human circumstance?

Then watch the gathering of the crowds, when the shadows of the evening begin to fall, and see them eagerly bringing their sick into the presence of this Master of human hearts.

Notice the tender touch Luke adds to his record of the same event (4: 40–41). In all the healing ministry of Jesus watch the way in which his human sympathy is called out.

This scene is the source of one of our beautiful evening hymns:

> "At even, ere the sun was set,
> The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;
> Oh, in what divers pains they met!
> Oh, with what joy they went away!"

The entire hymn breathes the feeling which this sunset scene inspires, and illustrates the sympathetic spiritual understanding which can take the bare statement of the letter and make it glow with the fire of the inner light of the spirit.

b. The withdrawal of Jesus for solitude and prayer.

There are many records of Jesus retiring from the crowds which followed him and from the disciples who loved him, to some place where he could be alone. It is worthy of note that our Lord always sought the sanctuary of nature. The ministry of sky and mountain and sea to the spirit of Jesus is very evident. It is not difficult to imagine upon what portion of the Scripture he would naturally meditate as he withdrew for communion with his Father. The Psalms are the storehouse

of great spiritual experiences and are filled with the ministry of nature to the worshipping soul. How much more must they have meant to him who saw in his Father's world depths of revelations undreamed of by those who first sang these ancient hymns, or those who through the long centuries since have found in them consolation and inspiration!

At the close of this busy Sabbath in Capernaum, we are invited by Mark to follow Jesus as he rises early 'the dark hour before the dawn" and seeks the seclusion of some place where he can be alone. The circuit of Galilee is about to begin and in it demands are waiting which spring from acute human need. Mark does not give us the details of this journey, but he does draw the veil before it is undertaken and bid us behold the Christ upon his knees under the open heaven in communion with his Father. The very silence is eloquent. It suggests a vital connection between prayer and work.

> "O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
> O calm of hills above,
> Where Jesus knelt to share with thee,
> The silence of eternity,
> Interpreted by love."

Notice how Peter leads the pursuit. Is there a question concealed in his remark? Is this the same question which haunts us when we seek time and solitude for prayer?

c. Thwarting the work of Jesus. Mark 1: 40–45.

Study this incident carefully to discover the limitations which his healing ministry imposed upon Jesus.

From what different standpoints was it regarded by himself and by the people?

Why was it that a work of mercy became the cause of such a serious restriction to his teaching ministry?

Gather together the impressions of the personality of Jesus which this study has brought you.

Analyze them and record them.

Make them the starting point for your future study.

STUDY VII

HOSTILITY OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO THE TEACHING OF THE MESSIAH

Touch our imagination, O God, with the quickening power of Thy Spirit; take the dimness of our soul away: in Thy light may we see light, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

STUDY VII—HOSTILITY OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO THE TEACHING OF THE MESSIAH.

Mark 2: 1–3: 6.

Read this section carefully, observing how Mark has brought together a series of incidents in which can be traced the causes of the bitter antagonism of the Pharisees. In doing so, he draws as vivid a picture of Jesus and the religious leaders, as he has done of Jesus and the people.

The conflict which is traced on these pages is not that of a mere difference of opinion, growing out of misunderstanding, but the inevitable warfare between two types of religion—the religion of the letter and the religion of the spirit. The one was rigid and legal; the other was plastic and human. Jesus lifted religion out of a system into a relationship. In doing this he encountered the bitterest opposition and the fiercest hostility.

Has this same conflict ever been repeated?

Has it ever been entirely absent since it began?

How is it to be recognized today?

I. The Question of Forgiveness

Mark 2: 1–12.

Study this incident carefully—the place, the circumstances, the several actors. The contrasts in the gospels are very vivid; they bring into sharp relief the various actors. The limelight which falls from the presence of

Jesus searches out all the dark places, and people stand before him revealed just as they are. The souls of men become transparent before the Master of the human spirit.

Take the passage before you as an example. What do you see and what do you feel?

Notice the atmosphere here. Are you sensitive to it?

What two mental attitudes are displayed by the actors in this scene? What different effects do these attitudes have upon character?

Notice that the scribes are mentioned here for the first time, and they are made to reveal their spirit. Why did the announcement of forgiveness by Jesus call forth the charge of blasphemy from the scribes? Did a different conception of God lie at the root of the objection? What was this difference? Did it involve an entirely new view of religion?

Consider how determining one's conception of God is upon religion. Express in words what you think was the difference between Jesus' conception of God and that of the scribes.

Notice that the charge of blasphemy drew from Jesus a declaration of authority in the moral and spiritual realm, which was followed by an evidence in the physical. Consider how the consciousness of his own place in the kingdom he is proclaiming, is betrayed in the assertion of his authority in the realm which in the minds of all is associated with God. Feel the thrill of expectation which filled the hearts of the people as expressed in their exclamation, "We never saw it on this fashion!" A new and wonderful thing had come into the world—a man who had the right to declare the forgiveness of sins!

How would you state the first offence?

In this assertion of authority by Jesus, there occurs for the first time a term which is often on his lips, a name which he gives to himself, "the Son of Man." Glance through Mark and see how many times it occurs in this gospel alone. Look up its history. Was it ever used before Jesus' day, and if so, in what connection? Was it a Messianic title?

On the lips of Jesus does it express a new and larger significance than ever before?

Why do you think Jesus chose it and made it peculiarly his own?

Do you think he put a Messianic content into it? Think a little what this content might be.

This title opens a door into the mind of Jesus. There is in its use more than a usual relation to men. The one who called himself "the Son of Man" did so out of a profound sense of a unique relation to humanity, as in his use of the words "the Son" he carries a sense of a unique relation to God, different from that of other men. Every time Jesus says, "the Son of Man," we are alert for something which reveals his mind, for we see that he feels himself representing and interpreting humanity, gathering it up into himself.

The Kingdom, which was his gospel, had humanity as its sphere. In this Kingdom the holiest human interests are to be conserved and realized, the divine and the human are to find each other through him who is the Son of Man.

II. The Question Concerning Social Intercourse with a Despised Class.

Mark 2: 13–17.

Again Mark brings us into the atmosphere of hostility. This time it is an offence which cuts deep into custom

and sentiment. The incident is introduced by a circumstance closely connected with it—the calling of Levi-Matthew, the tax-collector, into discipleship. Read the few words in which this momentous event in Matthew's life is recorded. Compare the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke.

Imagine all that must have gone before the final invitation and its acceptance.

It was the response of a smothered soul to a person in whom the man saw reality. Here is receptivity where it was not expected, a surrender of all that had once filled life to a personal allegiance which from this time on was to create a new life interest. The one who dared to call a Roman tax-collector into intimate friendship challenged his supreme allegiance. The event was prophetic. It was the herald of a new day, when the barriers which divided men were to fall. Through Levi, Jesus came into touch with the large publican class, representatives of which had been already following him. These men were not frequenters of the synagogues, there was no place for them in organized religion, yet their receptivity to Jesus is shown by their ready response to his message.

Is there something here which finds a parallel in our own day?

Think over this supper in Levi's house and observe that Jesus goes to the full length in fellowship. Here again was something new, it held a new revelation of God. It provokes not merely a question but a complaint.

In Jesus' reply notice in what capacity he speaks of himself. Cf. Matt. 11:19. He quotes the popular verdict concerning himself, "A friend of publicans and sinners." Jesus' message was too human for those who had divorced religion from life.

State what you consider the second offence to be.

Review the first and second offences and allow your mind to dwell upon the principles of religion and life which are liberated by Jesus in his conflict with the leaders of religious thought in his day.

How far have these same principles entered into your own religious convictions and habits of conduct?

STUDY VIII

HOSTILITY OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO THE TEACHING OF THE MESSIAH—Continued

O Lord, the Lord whose ways are right, keep us in Thy mercy from lip service and empty forms; from having a name that we live, but being dead. Help us to worship Thee by righteous deeds and lives of holiness; that our prayer also may be set forth in Thy sight as the incense, and the lifting up of our hands be as an evening sacrifice.—*Christina Rossetti.*

STUDY VIII—HOSTILITY OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO THE TEACHING OF THE MESSIAH—Continued.

III. The Question Concerning Fasting.

Mark 2: 18–20.

What place did fasting have in Jewish life? Cf. Luke 18: 9–14.

How had it come to hold such an important place?

Do you recall any occasion on which Jesus himself fasted?

Did Jesus teach his disciples to fast as a religious duty?

What inference do you draw from this seeming indifference to a much valued religious custom?

Read Matt. 6: 16–18. Here are explicit directions about fasting. Do these directions point to a different attitude toward this practice?

Study Mark 2: 18–20 and Matt. 6: 16–18 together.

In the answer of Jesus to the question of the Pharisees' disciples, notice that he indicates that there are circumstances in which fasting is natural as an expression of inward feeling. In this same connection recall the teaching given in Matt. 6.

What does this suggest to you about the value of forms in religion? In how far are they of value? When do they become a danger? What attitude toward them reflects the mind of Christ?

Notice the veiled reference to the taking away of the Bridegroom. Why do you think Jesus spoke of himself

in this way? In what way does it serve to bring into clear light the merits of the question he is answering?

Have a wedding and fasting anything in common?

There is an intimation of a time when such an expression of feeling would be natural.

Do you feel in Jesus' words an assertion of his own supreme place in religion, his determining effect upon life?

Two short parables which reflect Jesus' feeling about the newness of his teaching and its essential difference from the religion of Judaism. Mark 2:21–22.

In the use of wedding phraseology, Jesus calls attention to the joyous character of the religion he is inviting men to experience. The ascetic side of life does not find a place in his example or teaching. He defines his mission in terms of life in its fulness (John 10:10), directing his appeal to the positive assent of the mind and heart. Jesus calls out the heroic in human nature, and makes men dissatisfied with ease.

> "The man who hath mightily won
> God out of knowledge and good out of infinite pain,
> And sight out of blindness and purity out of a stain"

is the man who has found the divine element in struggle and has heard the call of the Christ to a life of spiritual effort. How does this differ from asceticism?

This emphasis of gladness and heroic endeavor was new in religion and Jesus was aware of its newness. Hear him talking to these men whose eyes were blinded by formalism and tradition, about patching old garments with a new piece of cloth. What do you think was in his mind as he used this quaint and homely figure? Listen to him as he talks about new wine in old wine-skins. Is there anything prophetic in these words?

Cf. Luke 5: 39.

What element in human nature finds sympathetic understanding in Jesus?

State the offence which this controversy about fasting created.

IV. The Question of the Sabbath.

Mark 2: 23–3: 6.

To understand the bitterness which lies at the heart of this controversy, we must get the point of view of the Pharisees. What place did the Sabbath have in Jewish faith?

Had there been any development in the law of the Sabbath in Jewish religious history?

Was the purpose of the day being realized in Jesus' time?

Consider the simple incident which raised the issue. State to yourself the position of the Pharisees. What were they attempting to conserve?

What idea of God lay behind their Sabbath observance?

What idea of man was the logical outgrowth of such a conception?

Return now to Jesus and his point of view. Do you feel certain fundamental questions tactfully raised in Jesus' words? One surely is, "What is the Sabbath for?" Another very close to this is, "Does this day conserve a divine or a human interest? Are the two separate and antagonistic?" Think over this until you see how the whole situation is analyzed and laid bare. Behind Jesus' words, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath," is an entirely different conception of God and man and life. Do not fail to see this, for in it is the line of cleavage between Jesus and the religious

leaders of his day and between Jesus and the religious leaders of all time who have a misconception of the divine values.

The holy day gets its sacredness from the service it is to render to the man who is the child of the Infinite. It was the man in Jesus' eyes who was sacred; it was the day in the eyes of the Pharisees. Consider how far apart these two conceptions are.

Listen to Jesus' statement of authority over everything which relates to man's life. Even the sacred day is under his control. He would restore it to its true purpose. In Judaism the human and divine were far apart, made so by a supposed separation of interests. Jesus brings them together in a family bond where the divine love and care reach out to safeguard and sanctify the whole realm of the human, and the human recognizes its highest allegiance to the divine in a true filial devotion. The Son of Man is the "Emancipator" of man's spirit from the slavery of religious legality.

State this fourth offence and review the various stages of Pharisaic opposition to the spirit of the Kingdom, and notice how it grows more persistent and bitter.

Think about the Christian Sabbath, the day which is set aside as sacred in our religion. What relation does it bear to the Sabbath of Judaism? Does the very change of day from the last to the first day of the week suggest a radical difference in nature and observance?

What do you consider is the divine purpose in this day and the use to which it should be dedicated? Try to answer this question from every point of view and find the principles which should govern our mental attitude and our habits in regard to it.

Study the incident which is given in Mark 3: 1–6. It

is a contest between the religious leaders and Jesus. Here two types of religion stand forth in all their power. Study the incident carefully—it contains material for sharp analysis and fine distinctions. It throws light upon certain habits of mind and their blighting results.

Study the questions of Jesus. They are full of knowledge of human nature and act as a sharp dissecting instrument, opening up the exact condition and forcing those who answer to commit themselves or remain silent.

Is the following quotation relevant to the dispute we are discussing? "Fanaticism is always busy and eager over the mere outworks of religion." What are "the mere outworks of religion"? How is fanaticism to be distinguished from zeal?

V. The Accusation of the Pharisaic Party from Jerusalem.

Mark. 3: 20–30.

The hatred of the Pharisees, who have now become the party of the opposition, reaches its climax in the accusation of Satanic possession. What does this illustrate of the blinding power of hatred? Consider their inability to discern moral values, and the complete inversions of moral issues. "Men lose their power of moral and spiritual vision, according to the depth at which they habitually live."

1. The appeal of family and their desire to shield Jesus. Mark 3: 31–35.

There is no attempt in the gospels to minimize the human relations and affections which pulled at the heart-strings of the Son of Man. He is rooted in human life; its ordinary relationships, obligations, and affections

belonged to him. This solicitude of the family of Jesus makes the contrast of the menacing hatred of the Pharisees more vivid and contains a human pathos which often escapes us, because our perceptions are not alert enough to discern it. The reply of Jesus is not a rude rejection of the claims of family or a cold rebuff of their affection, but an assertion of a relation which is of the very essence of family, but extends beyond the limitations created by blood to those relations created by the spirit. There is a family of God where the kinship of the spirit supersedes the kinship of the flesh.

"We cannot make our relationship too spiritual. We cannot be too careful to see them in God and God in them. Think of what it is to see a relationship in God, to see it existing there in his life, as his thought, long, long before we were born, long before we had an idea that we were intended to realize it. What a new light on old relationships—brother, sister, father, child. They seem so common and natural, and yet they are awful and sacred and mysterious. And then think what it is to see God in them, to see One from whom all family life flows, penetrating those whom we have never properly learnt to love and those whom we love as much as we can."*

VI. The Conflict in Its Later Stages.

Mark 7.

The controversy which is recorded in the chapter before us belongs much later in the ministry of Jesus. It is introduced here because it is a continuation and development of the warfare we have been following, and

* Letters of Forbes Robinson, p. 84.

shows the unmistakable attitude of Jesus toward the ceremonial and traditional elements in the Law, an attitude which added bitterness and intensity to the hostility towards him already aroused in the leaders of Judaism.

1. The charge of ignoring a tradition (vs. 1–5).

Read the chapter carefully, noting the incident which occasioned the discussion.

Observe the detailed explanations of Jewish practices of purification. These practices had grown from generation to generation and were a part of the Rabbinical interpretation of the Law, as authoritative to the Jews as was the Law itself. These interpretations were known as "the tradition of the elders." Paul refers to his own zeal in observing these Rabbinical additions to the Holy Writings (Gal. 1:14) and we need to remember how powerful this part of the Law was in Jewish religious life to appreciate the importance of Jesus' attitude toward it.

Consider what is implied in the answer of Jesus to the charge of non-conformity which is concealed in the question of the Pharisees (vs. 5–13). The time is past for persuasive teaching; the chasm between himself and the Pharisees is now too wide to be bridged. In this charge there is indictment and exposure of a false conception of religion. Study these words well; they contain for all time the warning against the power of tradition to obscure the real things in religion.

Is there any such danger in religious life today?

2. The declaration of the true nature of defilement (vs. 14–23).

There is something more startling here than the tra-

dition of the elders; the sacred Law itself is under the searching judgment of the Christ.

The law of clean and unclean meats was a part of the ancient code of holiness (Lev. 11). It should have served its purpose as an external illustration of something inward and spiritual and have been left behind, for its work was done, but instead it was still claiming the obedience of men as though it were the truth itself and not a symbol. In this is to be seen the entire religious situation which Jesus himself was unable to penetrate with his liberating gospel.

It is significant that he called the multitude together, that even the simplest man might hear his words of emancipation, for they held a new conception of religion, a new and startling responsibility for the individual. Defilement is not an external matter; its roots are within.

Why is this last statement of Jesus' a fitting climax to his conflict with the religious leaders?

Review the entire study of this conflict and sum up what you conceive to be Jesus' attitude to the religion of his fathers.

VII. The Indictment of the Pharisaic Spirit.

Matt. 23.

Examine these charges with care and thought. These are the most severe words which Jesus ever uttered. Notice the clear distinctions which Jesus makes. What had the Pharisees done to religion? What had religion done to them?

In this tragic history of religious formalism, listen to the warning which it holds for all generations of men. When the spirit of the living God is confined to rules and forms and ceremonies, when the trappings of religion

smother its eternal voice, when literalism holds the minds of men in bondage, then is reproduced a situation similar to that which met Jesus in the days of his flesh, and then are heard again his solemn words, "Ye make void the word of God by your tradition."

STUDY IX
LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

The Christian does not believe that the world was called into being by a mischievous desire for life: it was created by the will of God. He calls this God "Our Father," and sees in Him the goal of all that lives. The Christian is ever looking onwards. He feels in himself and sees around him a germination, a growth, and a ripening, all moved by one higher Will. Amid all this each soul is drawn forward and lifted upward by that one living Power, whom we all call our Father, and who is the goal for us all. He only understands Jesus truly who feels within himself the movement onwards and upwards that is working in all things that exist; and such a man's heart leaps for joy when he thinks on God. The Christian religion is profoundly concerned with the future; it is the religion of hope.—*Bernhard Duhm.*

STUDY IX.—LIFE IN THE KINGDOM.

Matt. 5: 1–20.

The Kingdom message which Jesus proclaimed was a *gospel;* it held glad tidings for men, therefore it must have an intimate connection with man's life here and now. The very word "kingdom" has a social content and forbids an individualistic interpretation. The Kingdom hope of Israel was preeminently a social one, expressed in the terms of a renewed and glorified Jewish state. On the lips of Jesus the Kingdom does not lose its social significance, but is lifted out of the material and national limitations which had characterized it during the centuries, into a spiritual and universal commonwealth, the commonwealth of the spirit.

It is the Kingdom of *God*, the kingdom in which God reigns as the supreme Sovereign in his relation as Father, over men who are not merely his subjects, but his sons, and therefore brothers to each other. Fatherhood, sonship, brotherhood, are the terms which describe the essence of the Kingdom and relate it to human life. Go back to the first announcement of the Kingdom made by Jesus (Mark 1: 14) and consider the immediacy of the declaration: "The Kingdom of God is at hand." There was no sudden unveiling of heavenly things, no upheaval of nature, nothing to arrest the attention of man, and yet it had drawn near! As we look back over twenty centuries, we understand the meaning of Jesus' words, for we recognize that in his own Person and by

his own work the Kingdom was present in the world then and is present in the world now, wherever that living Presence wins the allegiance of men and molds their motives and conduct.

"The Kingdom that came in with Jesus was not of this world. (John 18: 36.) It was an unworldly, spiritual force. If we wish to compass its meaning, we should inquire what the Kingdom of God is designed to be as a dominant force in the actual life of men; what are its motives, its inspirations and aspirations, and what its impelling powers; what are the relations on which it takes hold; how it leads men to regard themselves and one another and their God; what are its principles of daily living; in what manner it will inspire men to live together in the common life; what revolutions and reconstructions it will bring to pass in the world if it prevails. These and such as these are the fundamental questions. And one thing more. The Kingdom that was brought in with Jesus takes its character from him. If we are questioned about its inmost character, we can say at once that it is the order of life in this present world that corresponds to his teaching and influence. It is the realization of his ideal. Jesus appeared and uttered his word and fulfilled his career in life and death; and out from him and his work there came forth that order of life, personal and social, in which the ancient expectation of the Kingdom of God was to be realized."*

Jesus knew himself to be the founder of the Kingdom —the Messiah, the one through whom men should find the filial life with God a reality out of which the true fraternal relation with each other would come.

A study of Jesus' Kingdom teaching brings us into

* The Ideal of Jesus, Clarke, p. 71.

the heart of his message. "As his whole work laid the foundation of the Kingdom, so his whole utterance of truth shows us what it is."* The basis of our present study will be the teaching known as "the Sermon on the Mount."

I. The Description of the Citizens of the Kingdom.

Matt. 5: 1–12.

Endeavor to forget for the time being the old associations which you have with the "beatitudes" and come to their study with a fresh interest as you see them in a larger setting.

Matthew places these beautiful sentences of benediction at the beginning of this long discourse which contains the germ of Jesus' ethical teaching. This is an example of Matthew's method of grouping material, which was referred to in the introduction. We have here, probably, the combination of several teachings of Jesus woven into a continuous discourse.

The introduction is very significant. The Kingdom is not an intangible state of abstract conditions; it is a positive thing rooted in the lives of men, a part of their very selves. Cf. Luke 17: 20–21. The inner life of the citizen, therefore, is of first importance.

Look at the introductory word, "blessed," or "happy." This word is indicative of the new order of life in the Kingdom. It is not gloom and repression, but blessedness and gladness; the Kingdom holds the realization of life's most glorious possibilities.

Think over the word "happiness," which is another translation of "blessedness." What is your idea of happiness? Does it correspond to that of Jesus? If

* Ideal of Jesus, Clarke, p. 76.

not, where is the difference? Is happiness an essential element in life? Is it a pursuit or an experience?

Study each one of these eight descriptions of happiness and find its essence. Do not slight the last one because it seems removed from present-day experience. The assertion of possessing the Kingdom is attached to the first "blessed" ones and the last; those whose need of God is felt so acutely as to make them absolutely dependent upon him—they realize the Kingdom as a possession. And those who have served in active warfare for its advancement and have suffered for its sake—they too know it as their own.

Hear the closing words, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." This signifies the outburst of joy. It is the joy of the heroic soul, the "shout of those who conquer." We are debtors to Jesus for the introduction of joy into struggle. He was preeminently the man of joy, and his followers are not true to his spirit when they are joyless.

The seal of the Kingdom is spiritual character. A personality growing through divine education into the likeness of the Father is the one over whom our Lord raises his hands in benediction and calls blessed!

II. The Twofold Responsibilities of Citizenship in the Kingdom.

Vs. 13-16.

Examine these figures of salt and light. They are warnings as well as exhortations. How do these warnings apply to Christians in our modern life? Notice the first use of the name Father.

The declaration of Jesus concerning his relation to the sacred Scriptures of his people. Vs. 17–19.

Notice how carefully Jesus defines his attitude to the past. Why would his teaching naturally raise questions on this point? Do the words "think not" suggest that Jesus knew how great the danger of misunderstanding and misinterpretation was? What do you feel in the words, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil?" Did Jesus look upon God's past revelation as final or progressive? What place is he conscious of holding in relation to the past?

Do not fail to feel in these words the emphasis which falls upon reverence as an attitude of mind. Those who destroy are very little in Jesus' eyes; the ones who construct are great. Reverence for truth, old and new, is the mark of a true son of God.

How would you state Jesus' attitude toward the sacred things of his people?

III. The Governing Principle of the Kingdom.

Vs. 20.

In what one word does Jesus define this principle?

What does the word mean?

Did Jesus use the word in a different sense from the meaning attached to it in Pharisaic circles?

Compare with verse 20, Luke 18: 9–14.

Jesus takes the word "righteousness" and deepens it by revealing the essence of personal religion, a life of joyous filial devotion to the Father. He enlarges the word by bringing one's brother into view, and socializes it. One can be truly righteous only in relations. Jesus put into the word more than it ever held before, because he revealed the infinite possibilities of both the filial and the fraternal life, the life in which righteousness is fully realized, in the ideal made luminous to men through himself.

STUDY X

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM—Continued

Give me, O my Father, the vision that comes to the pure in heart, even the discernment of Thy presence through every hour of my day. Give me strength to bear, courage to stand, patience to wait. Help me to make the mind of Christ the standard of my actions, the cross of Christ the measure of my love, until through fellowship with Him my life reflects Thee truly.

STUDY X—LIFE IN THE KINGDOM—Continued.

IV. The Ethics of the Kingdom.

Matt. 5: 21–48.

In this section we have Jesus' interpretation of the word "righteousness." As you study, notice the social content which Jesus gives to the word.

Notice also the imperial tone in the often recurring words, "but I say unto you."

The way in which the eternal principles of the law of God had been reduced to a code of rules by the legal spirit of Judaism is an illustration and warning of the danger which lurks in all bondage to the letter which hinders the unrestricted action of the spirit. It calls us to a solemn searching of our own habits of thought, lest we too become so engrossed in our religious traditions that we lose the sense of a living God, speaking to us in the present and leading us to new and larger conceptions of truth.

To the people of Jesus' day the voice of God was silent. He had ceased to be a Living Presence. He was known through his revelation in the past, but even that had become obscured by the many layers of scribal interpretation which had grown around it during the centuries.

Jesus claims the right to change the function of the law to a means instead of an end. He sees in it his Father's method of teaching his children and of nourishing their life; it was to lead them to God and not to be worshipped instead of God. The law was given, as

Paul afterwards expressed it, to be their "schoolmaster." The tendency of human nature is to consider as a goal that which was intended to be a means, and thus to erect a permanent habitation upon what was manifestly given as a highway on which to travel.

The greatest illustration of this tendency is before us in our study. The Jews were living in their law as a fortress. Jesus called them to live upon it as a nourishing sustenance and to find in it, directing principles for conduct which should sanctify life itself, for human life was the sacred thing to him, the supreme concern of his heart and the object of his Father's redeeming love.

The interpretation of righteousness.

1. In the relation to one's brother. Vs. 21–26.

It is worthy of reflection that the first illustration is the brotherly one. The door of the secret laboratory of the spirit is opened, where the elements of feeling saturated with hatred unite and produce that awful anomaly in the world—a murderer! The finger of Jesus touches the entire process and he brings anger out into the light and shows that it is the progenitor of destruction. Rightness in relationships is fundamental in the Kingdom. "Thou shalt not be angry with thy brother"—this is sin against the family life of the Kingdom.

Notice how far Jesus goes in analyzing the component parts of anger.

What is the equivalent of "Raca" in our modern speech?

Is there a suspicion of scorn and contempt in the word?

Go a step further and consider the epithet of abuse in the words, "Thou fool."

How would you express Jesus' teaching concerning right feeling and language toward one's brother?

Follow Jesus as he works further inward into the inner life of men, where the holy place of religion has its shrine. He holds up to the light a religious act and places beside it a moral duty and shows which is sacred (vs. 23–24). There is nothing uncertain in these words. They cut deep into the grain of sincerity. Examine them thoughtfully and review your own religious life in the light of this standard.

This is not a plea for forgiveness on your part, it is a statement of your responsibility in helping to make it possible for your brother to forgive you. It is your own effort toward reconciliation. This is far-reaching, and interprets religion in infinitely wider terms than those in which we are accustomed to formulate it. Turn now to Matt. 18:21–35 and find Jesus' teaching about the other side of reconciliation, that of forgiving anyone who has transgressed against you.

Is there any way of escape left for a Christian in this matter?

Is anything less than the utmost endeavor on our part to keep relationships right, worthy of us as members of the Kingdom?

2. In the relation to one's family. Vs. 27–32. Cf. Mark 10:2–12.

We have here a disclosure of the mind of Christ in regard to a much disputed social question. The divine ideal of the family is its inviolability. The sin against the marriage relation is a blow against the very foundation of the social order, which expresses the divine purpose for human life. The family is the training school

in which character is developed and the elemental lessons of life are learned. Shattered families are fragments of precious treasures which have lost their use and beauty and are scattered on the dust heap of the world. The family in the Kingdom of God is sacred and inviolate.

3. In relation to one's self. Vs. 33–48.

Observe the movement of this interpretive process from the outer circumference of brotherly relations to the inner sphere of family, and from that to the innermost of all, one's self.

a. In one's words. Vs. 33–37.

Express the thought contained in these simple directions in your own language and relate it to present-day life.

Is juggling with truth an uncommon thing today?

Do some serious thinking on the transformation there would be in the world if every Christian person spoke the truth simply and directly.

In the directions which Jesus gives for speech, notice the insistence upon honesty. This is personal integrity, righteousness at the core. We cannot be right in the circumference of our life, if we are not right at the center.

There is a startling statement of Jesus' recorded in Matthew 12:36 which carries the thought we are considering beyond the present and into the future. The ethics of words faces us here as well as their horizons and circumferences. Do not leave this section until you have felt the demand there is in it for a speech which is rooted in personal integrity and freighted with timeless responsibility.

b. In one's attitude. Vs. 38–42.

Are these literal directions or are they principles of conduct?

If they are principles, what did Jesus mean?

Paraphrase them for yourself.

What attitude of mind do they call out?

Is this a usual way of behaving even among Christians? What does it magnify? What does it check?

Is there any place for retaliation among the disciples of Christ?

Notice that these are not negative directions, but positive ones, calling for an attitude of mind which has a Christian momentum. The obvious teaching is certainly not the negative one of no retaliation, but the positive one of doing far more than is required or expected; not mathematical exactness in one's dealings with others, but generosity which does not weigh or count the cost. This has its origin in what we called "a spirit" which thinks generously and acts spontaneously. The crest of the Kingdom carries the insignia of the cross; the motto of the Kingdom expresses the spirit of its life—"Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

How can this spirit be carried out into the world as a working force?

c. In one's feeling. Vs. 43–48.

Have you noticed how steadily Jesus has been working inward in all of these teachings, until he has reached the deepest thing in man, his emotional life? Is it not a compelling thing that, when this is reached, the mind is directed to the supreme example of love in thought and service, "Your Father who is in heaven"? The appeal to men who are the children of the Infinite is to bear in their lives the image of their Father, in hearts full of

love and mercy for those who have sinned against them. The unwearying goodness of God is argued from his unfailing kindness toward men in the daily blessings of sun and rain, which are independent of all personal deserts, and are among the most essential things in the order of nature.

Jesus reaches his climax in describing the character of his Father, in lifting him before the eyes of men as the greatest example of love, forgiving and serving. Jesus asks a searching question which explains all he has been saying, reflecting his own mind upon all of these matters. "What do *ye* more than others?" The call of the Kingdom is not to an average life, not to a moral mediocrity, but to the uncommon and the extraordinary.

The perfect character of the Father is to be the standard for the children. The word perfect means full growth, completion, maturity. See the way Paul uses the same word (Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; I. Cor. 2:6). The goal before us is a completely developed spiritual manhood. This is made the apex of the pyramid whose base is righteousness and whose top is love. "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's Heaven for?"

Before leaving this study, go back and chart out this set of principles as the standard for the ordering of your life. If this were all we had of Jesus' Kingdom teaching, we should have enough to enlighten us as to what the Kingdom meant to him.

Beneath these words there is the demand for a renewed and vitalized personal life.

STUDY XI

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM—Continued

The religious life can never be one of mere passive appreciation, or aesthetic admiration; it requires through and through the active, ethical will. The revelation of God in Christ is pre-eminently the revelation of an ethical will, of character; and such a revelation makes demands upon one; it is a constant appeal to conscience, a persistent motive to willing. The very existence of harmonious personal relation to God requires such an ethical will in the worshipper. Nothing less than this is really giving God and the spiritual world a chance at us.—*Henry Churchill King.*

STUDY XI—LIFE IN THE KINGDOM —Continued.

Matt. 6.

V. The Determining Effect of the Kingdom upon Acts of Religion.

Matt. 6: 1–18.

We have seen that Jesus re-stated the law in terms which brought its precepts into practical relation with the experiences of actual life. We have found in them the governing principles of the Kingdom. They are primarily social in their application, and plainly demonstrate the social character of Jesus' Kingdom teaching.

There can be no renewed social order until there is a new set of standards which regulate human life and make it reflect the thought and purpose of God. This will not come through external reformation, but only through internal regeneration, the awakening in men of the spirit of sonship with its august responsibilities of brotherhood. The available material which was ready at hand for use in Jesus' teaching was that which presented itself in the familiar religious ideas and practices of Judaism. We have seen that he used the inadequate Pharisaic interpretation of the law to illustrate the surpassing greatness of his own teaching of social righteousness. We shall now turn to the use he makes of Pharisaic practice as a contrasting example of the stern demand in the Kingdom for reality in personal religion.

1. In the matter of almsgiving. Vs. 1–4.

Notice how the warning is phrased. What place did almsgiving have in the religious practice of the Pharisees? Was it the same as the place it has in Christianity? Why is giving a matter of personal religion? Is it commonly recognized as such? If it were, what effect do you think it would have upon the whole matter?

Notice how Jesus draws attention to the underlying motive in giving, and observe the finality which he attaches to the kind which springs from the desire to be recognized. "Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward." It is as though a receipt were given with the words "Paid in full" written across it. There is nothing further to expect.

Now turn to the direction given to the sons of the Kingdom (vs. 3–4). Observe the difference in tone. Giving is a spiritual thing, it partakes of the hidden life of the soul. It is something between one's self and God, and therefore an act of religion. The idea of recompense is present in this statement of Jesus'. How does it differ from that which is present in the Pharisees' motive?

Is recompense in itself an unworthy thing? Is it possible to do anything which does not carry in it some degree of recompense? Think over this and discover what innumerable avenues of thought it opens. In connection with this, take the words of Jesus recorded in Luke 6: 38 and in Mark 10: 29–30. How are these words to be interpreted? Have you had any experience which will help you to translate them into spiritual values?

Return to the section we are studying and put into the term "alms" the whole wide range of giving and bring your thought back to its religious significance. At first it seems rather far removed from religion as we

are accustomed to regard it, but is there not an extraordinary fitness in the direction of thought, even in this most personal of all things, away from one's self to one's brother? Our religion determines our attitude in all things which pertain to him and is tested by it.

The demand for reality in the children of the Kingdom is uncompromising.

2. In the matter of prayer. Vs. 5–15.

Again look at the contrast which Jesus draws and feel the withering effect of formalism upon this elemental act of religion. Notice the reiteration of the words, "They have received their reward." When prayer becomes a form instead of an experience, the hidden fire which it kindles dies out and the glow of spiritual life disappears. Prayer in the Christian sense is the fellowship of the soul with God. To make it an exercise is to degrade it and destroy its very purpose.

a. Study the directions Jesus gives for prayer (vs. 5–8).

How would you state them? Does this suggest the habit of prayer? What is the value of habit here? What place do you think silence has in personal prayer? Is the element of silence present in the words "and when thou hast shut thy door, pray unto thy Father"? "Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together, that at length they may emerge full formed and majestic into the daylight of life." In this connection read Psalm 62: 1, 5, noticing especially the marginal reading.

Is silence vacuity? Test this in some human relation where you have found it both natural and expressive. It is to be remembered that Jesus never spoke about

prayer in the abstract. He always homed it in the heart of the divine Fatherhood. "Pray unto thy Father." With this compare Luke 11: 1–13. How much, then, does true prayer depend upon the conception of God which is filling the mind of the praying person? Which is the essential question, Do I believe in prayer? or Do I believe in God? Does the last question carry the first as an inherent part of itself? Is there lurking in the first a kind of magic?

Prayer in the Christian sense is different from prayer in the non-Christian sense, because the God the Christian believes in fills prayer with a new content and gives it a new motive.

Fellowship with God is the essence of religion; into this fellowship Jesus brings those who will be led by him, and the God they find is the Father of their spirits.

We find here not only directions for prayer, but warnings as well (vs. 7–8). What does Jesus mean by "vain repetitions"? Is it the same thing as repeated requests? Study Luke 18: 1–8 with this question in mind. Prayer is not merely silent communion, it is petition also. There is an intense activity in it. Meditation and action are never far apart in Jesus' teaching; the one leads into the other.

Think over the apparent inconsistency in the encouragement Jesus gives for petition for personal needs and at the same time the assurance that those needs are already known by the Father? Have you ever felt the question rising, "If God knows already, why should I ask him?" See if you can find an answer which will open other doors into this vast subject of prayer.

Think over all of these suggestions and questions and apply them to your own prayer life.

Consider also that in the experience of prayer the determining relation in the Kingdom of God is in view—the child and the Father, the filial life, which is the very heart of Jesus' teaching. Reality, trustful and spontaneous, is the essence of this relation.

b. The model prayer. Vs. 9–15.

Study these familiar words anew in the light of Jesus' Kingdom teaching.

Notice how social this prayer is in its implications.

Notice how heaven and earth are brought together as parts of one whole, where the perfect will of the Father shall be done without distinction.

Consider how the divine and human interests are related as belonging together.

3. In the matter of fasting. Vs. 16–18.

Recall what has already been said on the subject of fasting. In this religious practice, one's self is in view as one's brother and one's God have been in the two preceding teachings concerning almsgiving and prayer.

Have you ever thought at all of your relation to yourself? It has a paradoxical sound, to be sure, but there is a sense in which it is a very real relation. There are vast tracts of life where one lives alone with one's self, in those strange, dimly understood capacities which lie hidden in the mysterious depth of each one's personality.

"Often in the world's most crowded streets,
Often in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life.

* * * * *

From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs and floating echoes."

—*Matthew Arnold, The Buried Life.*

In this personal religious act of fasting, the self rises and in the mirror which Jesus holds up we are able to discern the possibility of vanity even in sacred things—parade of virtue—in order to be thought virtuous. There is something very subtle here and very deceptive.

Take the habit of fasting and allow it to stand for self-discipline in all its various forms. There are fasts in life far more real than any literal abstinence from food. Can you think of any? What place has discipline in your religious life? Is this self-denial or something deeper? Life in the Kingdom demands nothing less than the most transparent, unwavering sincerity.

STUDY XII

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM—Continued

Do not be over-anxious about anything, but by prayer and earnest pleading, together with thanksgiving, let your requests be unreservedly made known in the presence of God. And the peace of God, which transcends all our powers of thought, will be a garrison to guard your hearts and minds in union with Christ Jesus.—*The New Testament in Modern Speech, Translated by Weymouth.*

STUDY XII—LIFE IN THE KINGDOM.—Continued.

VI. The Determining Effect of the Kingdom upon the Environment of Life.

Matt. 6: 19–34.

These are familiar words; we have heard them all our lives. They are so old as to tread lightly over the surface of our minds, making scarcely any impression, because familiarity has deadened their wonderful message. Yet in them is the breath of a strange, unworldly, heavenly atmosphere, which is able to change completely the air of our earthly life. If we will live in it and breathe it, life will become spiritually oxygenated.

In the previous studies we have listened to Jesus explaining the nature of the Kingdom and the effect of its governing principles upon life. These principles have had to do largely with what we call "spiritual" things.

Has this Master of life anything to say about the things which we term "earthly"? When we remember that the earth is the sphere in which the Kingdom is to come, the place where men are to live its blessed life, we naturally expect from Jesus some instruction which has to do with the conditions and circumstances of this earthly life, and we are not disappointed in our expectation. The Kingdom has a determining effect upon the environment of life. Let us consider what this effect is.

Read with care and concentration the passage before us for study, Matt. 6: 19–34. Try to outline it, so as to

discover its central thought and the way this thought is developed. It is evident that the affairs of everyday life are in view.

See how Jesus at once puts his fingers upon the primary physical needs, food and clothing. How much these two words say! To the majority of people they stand for life's most pressing and persistent necessities. How is this whole matter of what we call material things to be regarded? What is there in the contrast between earthly and heavenly treasures which prepares the way for what follows? Against what two attitudes of mind is Jesus' warning directed? Does Jesus mean that men should have no possessions upon the earth? If not, state what you think he does mean.

What great principle underlies this first general warning?

Take the figure of the eye (vs. 22–23) as an illustration of moral health. The physical eye very quickly shows conditions of health or illness. Any defect in it limits vision and blurs visual impressions. The spiritual organ of vision is equally sensitive, and if diseased a blurred moral vision is the result, with its tragic accompaniment of the loss of moral discernment.

Follow this out as far as you can and see how endless the chain of consequences is, especially when the darkness is in a recognized son of the Kingdom (vs. 23).

The next illustration is the one of two masters (vs. 24). Of what recognized fact in life does this take account? What one word carries the thought here? Define the word.

Mammon is used as the personification of wealth. What was Jesus' attitude toward wealth? Did he discourage personal possession? Look up all of Jesus'

teaching on this subject and correlate it. Find the principle which underlies this whole subject. Why do we need to have the attitude toward wealth which correctly reflects the mind of Christ?

Come now to the definite teaching concerning anxiety about earthly things (vs. 25–34). Compare the rendering of verse 25 in the King James version with the reading in the American Revision. Is "anxiety" the same as "take no thought"? What is the difference? Notice that the revision corrects the impression which the old version created and places the whole matter in a new light. To take thought belongs to the duty of life, to be torn with anxiety belongs to its waste. Food and clothing are in view, grim necessities to most of the world! Observe how the argument is carried on by means of questions. What do these questions lay bare? What do they eliminate? To what does Jesus direct attention?

Notice how completely Jesus uncovers the skeleton of fear—anxiety, which becomes the torture of worry. To many people the fear of living is far more real than the fear of dying. Reflect upon the part fear plays in life and imagine what life would be for every Christian if this incubus were entirely removed. Is fear a consistent thing for a Christian to allow in his life?

Follow out Jesus' thought as he turns to the world of nature for his illustrations of the guardian care of his heavenly Father, and listen to his questions which have in them a rebuke for lack of confidence in the faithfulness of God. There is almost a tender irony in the words which express the futility of anxiety.

The determining effect of the Kingdom in the realm of physical necessity is to lift sonship into its legitimate place. Jesus has been describing a condition of mind

which is unfilial. Back of all the needs, cares, and circumstances which form the environment in which our life is lived, is the Father, who knows, cares, and provides for his children. This is a call from the lips of Jesus to entrust ourselves and all we hold dear to God's Fatherhood. Trustful dependence upon God as Father will remove fear, lift the burden of anxiety and set men free from the bondage which fear imposes. Does it seem perilous? In all great things there is the element of adventure: faith is the adventure of the soul.

"Have faith in God," is one of Jesus' most pressing invitations, and it is to be remembered that he carried it up to and through Calvary. How far do we believe in God in the sense of entrusting ourselves and all we care for most to him?

Go back and read over the passage we have been studying, taking to it the thoughts which have come as we have been discussing it. Do you feel its atmosphere of serenity and spiritual poise, as the great values have been separated by Jesus from those which really do not matter? It is a quiet lesson in relative values which should set us to the re-ordering of our own lives.

We are brought back again to the paramount thing in the world, the Kingdom of God and its interests. This provides us with a supreme allegiance and a standard by which values are to be measured. "The characteristic life of the Kingdom is a life above this world, lived in personal fellowship with God. From him its motives and inspirations proceed. The various forms of Christian experience all find their place in the Kingdom and do their part in fulfilling its ideal. Religion, the life of man

in his relation to God, is the realm in which the entire work of the Kingdom goes on, and the ideal man of the Kingdom is a richly and comprehensively religious man."*

* The Ideal of Jesus, Clarke, p. 96.

STUDY XIII

THE NATURE, GROWTH, AND VALUE OF THE KINGDOM

We beseech Thee, O Lord, in Thy loving-kindness, to pour Thy holy light into our souls; that we may ever be devoted to Thee, by whose wisdom we were created, and by whose providence we are governed through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Gelasian Sacramentary, A.D. 494.*

STUDY XIII—THE NATURE, GROWTH, AND VALUE OF THE KINGDOM.

Mark 4; Matt. 13.

Read over these parables and think of them as stories told by the master story-teller.

Why is a story such a powerful method of conveying moral and religious instruction? Notice how often Jesus used the story in his teaching. Sometimes, as in the study before us, it took the form of nature parables; at other times human life and relationships in all their varied aspects are used to illustrate divine truth, as for example, the inimitable stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son recorded in Luke 15, describing both the human and the divine joy in the recovery of lost possessions, and protraying the yearning love of the heavenly Father over his erring and wandering children.

Two of our Lord's most important teachings on prayer are in the form of stories, illustrating the surpassing goodness and faithfulness of God in comparison with the selfishness and impatience of men. Luke 11: 5–13; Luke 18: 1–8.

The study which we have just completed (Study XII), is introduced in Luke's gospel by the story of the rich fool, which graphically illustrates the destructive power of avarice in a human life. Luke 12: 13–21.

To these may be added the parables of judgment and responsibility recorded in Matt. 20: 1–16; Matt. 22: 1–14. Matt. 25: 1–46. Even a casual reading of these parables

will show how largely Jesus availed himself of this appealing form of instruction.

Jesus' teaching followed no prescribed method; it took different forms as occasion demanded, and is marked by its spontaneity. There is an indication in the words recorded in Mark 4: 33 of the object always in view—the adaptation of truth to the capacity of men to receive it.

Jesus "intentionally emphasized the relationship of what he taught and commanded to the ordinary earthly phenomena and the common modes of human conduct. No facts of nature or of human life appeared too small to be unable to aid him in bringing his teaching of the Kingdom of God home to the human understanding."*

I. The Adoption of the Parable as a Form of Teaching.

Is there a suggestion in the question of the disciples recorded in Matt. 13: 10 that the use of the parable marked a change in Jesus' method of teaching? Is there something suggestive in the fact that the parable is used more largely after the early ministry has closed and the period of conflict with the religious leaders has reached a critical stage? What light does the answer of Jesus to the query of the disciples throw upon the subject? Mark 4: 10–12; Matt. 13: 10–15.

Was the parable primarily for the disciples or for the multitude? Was it an intentional obscuring of truth or an appeal to the imagination to inquire further into truth? Read Isa. 6 from which these words are quoted. The prophet had been proclaiming Jehovah's message for some time and had met with little else but persistent unbelief. These words represent the result of work already done, and not the motive for doing it, as the

* The Teaching of Jesus, Wendt, Vol. I. pp. 150–151.

words at first seem to suggest. Jesus is midway in his own ministry, and there has been little response so far. The minds of the people are unresponsive and their ears seem to be closed to his message; there is not much fruit to garner from his labors. It is a situation similar to that which met the prophet, and the ancient words tell the same discouraging story. They are to be interpreted as retrospect rather than as finality.

II. The Relation of the Parables to Jesus' Teaching Concerning the Kingdom.

Observe in the parables recorded in Mark 4 and Matt. 13 the presence of such phrases as, "the Kingdom of heaven is likened unto," and "so is the Kingdom of God," and "How shall we liken the Kingdom of God?" We are reminded by these words that the Kingdom of God is the subject of each parable.

The principles of the Kingdom have already been laid down in Jesus' ethical teaching, and he now describes the nature and growth of the Kingdom in a series of nature parables. What does this suggest of Jesus' outlook and expectation concerning the way the Kingdom is to come? Why does nature afford such a perfect illustration of the working of spiritual laws?

The Kingdom is a living thing, not a mere theory or ideal. It is present in the world now, and not far off in the distant future. Because it is living, the law of all living things applies to it, the law of development.

Study the parables recorded in Matt. 13, and the one peculiar to Mark in 4:26–29. Notice how wonderfully they describe the working of this law. See if you can discover the three aspects in which the Kingdom

is described in these parables. Do you find any peculiarity in relationship in the parables?

III. The Description of the Kingdom.

1. The sower scattering his seed. Matt. 13: 1–9, 18–23.

What idea does a seed suggest? The very fact that Jesus takes such a germinal thing for an analogy, tells us much of what he conceived the Kingdom to be in its nature.

Notice how he develops his parable. What is it that varies, the seed or the soil? Notice how entirely the growth of the seed is dependent upon the soil into which it falls? How would you translate this into human terms?

Does this seem to limit the growth of the Kingdom in the world? Is this true to the divine way of working? Does this recall the message of Jesus in his initial proclamation?

Analyze the four kinds of soil and make your own application. What did Jesus have in mind when he spoke these words? Had he found this true in his own experience? Are we responsible for our spiritual capacity?

Does the varying degree of fruit which comes from "the good ground" point to the same ability and capacity in all?

What then does such a difference prevent us from expecting? What does it stimulate us to achieve? For what is each person held responsible?

In connection with the analogy of the seed and the different soils, take the short parable of the seed growing secretly, found only in Mark (4: 26–29). What different side of the developing process is emphasized here? What very comforting fact does it quietly remind us of?

2. The mustard seed and the leaven. Matt. 13: 31–33.

Notice how different these two short parables are from that of the seed being sown in the earth. How would you state the difference?

How do they continue to develop the idea of the Kingdom? What further phase of the Kingdom is here described?

What do these two little parables tell us of Jesus' expectation concerning the coming of the Kingdom he was proclaiming?

3. The tares and the dragnet. Matt. 13: 24–30, 47–50.

What story do these parables tell?

Has history verified their general teaching?

Have we any reason to believe that the progress of the Kingdom in the world will be unhindered by obstacles, or its life undefiled by evil in the guise of good? Do these things discharge any of us from our allegiance to its holy standards or from labor for its sake?

Have you ever heard cheap excuses for lack of interest, made by those whose scorn was expressed in words which implied a superior righteousness? Over against this kind of pretence, which is born of hypocrisy, put the unwearying patience of God.

Have you ever considered how much evil God tolerates and how long-suffering he is? The Kingdom is his great enterprise in the world. Evil cannot slay it, although it does retard it. God in Christ is slowly but surely winning the empire of men's hearts and through them is bringing to bear upon the world the principles of his Son. When we hear from Jesus the story of the tares and the dragnet, we are reminded that he saw difficulty in the way of the Kingdom, and

discipline and retribution for men, but in his faith he saw the realization of the Kingdom in the world. The Lord direct our hearts into the patience of Christ!

4. The treasure hidden in the field, and the pearl of great price. Matt. 13:44–46.

There is a change in tone, our attention is called to the incomparable value of the Kingdom. It is so great that men gladly give their all to gain it. This is another and more graphic way of telling men that the Kingdom is first and is to be sought above all else. Here the weight falls equally upon what men receive, and upon what they give.

This way of approach is true to human instinct. Men are willing to give all they possess for something which they value. The Kingdom is here protrayed as the supreme value in two aspects, appealing to two types of temperament, a treasure hidden in a field and a costly pearl. Why is land termed "real estate"? Is there something in a treasure hidden in a field which makes a stronger appeal to certain people as a possession than a pearl, however costly? Is there something in a wonderful gem, shining in its white purity, more really beautiful to others than any plot of ground?

The practical and the idealistic are both in the world—to each the Kingdom makes its appeal. To give one's all for a pearl is more venturesome than to expend it upon a field! The Kingdom is both a solid possession and a high adventure. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

STUDY XIV

DEMONSTRATION OF POWER AVAILABLE IN THE KINGDOM

The question of miracle is nowhere the question of the "isolated wonder," but everywhere rather the question of the wider law, the larger correlation, the dominant spiritual order increasingly clear to a growing spiritual culture, the consistency of the one great, loving purpose of a God great enough and loving enough to be all that His children need.—*Henry Churchill King.*

STUDY XIV—DEMONSTRATION OF POWER AVAILABLE IN THE KINGDOM.

Mark 5; Matt. 8; Luke 7: 1–17; 8: 22–56.

In these records we touch a new world; a strange and unusual set of circumstances confronts us, a sense of the availability of power unknown to our life arouses in us wonder, often questions, always awe. We are face to face with the supernatural. What does it all mean? What doors are there opened for us into the infinite resources of our God? What invitation to explore a hitherto unknown territory? We are all more or less conscious of a world lying about us, the evidence of "high instincts before which our mortal nature did tremble like a guilty thing surprised." But as we raise our hand to touch what seems so near, it evades our grasp, and its dim outlines recede again into the shadowy distance, and we are left to move about "in worlds not realized," and yet we are sure that these worlds exist.

The question before us just now is the question of miracle, but this is only part of something much larger. The real question at issue is the one which asks if our world is a spiritual order and is governed by forces which are spiritual, as well as by those which we in our ignorance call material. The approach to the whole question of the possibility of miracle is changed by the raising of this larger inquiry, for miracle is seen to be not an isolated marvel, unrelated to the existing order of things, or interrupting the orderly course of nature, but the assertion of a greater whole than we as yet comprehend.

If our world is really a spiritual system, expressing through its laws a divine purpose and holding a divine Presence, is it unreasonable to expect that Presence to reveal himself to and on behalf of beings who are related to him in moral life? Any manifestation of the divine power in what we call a miracle cannot be an invasion of the laws of nature, for we are sure that these laws have been ordained by God himself, and are therefore not set aside by him, else all confidence in a stable universe would be at an end. If such a thing as miracle is possible at all, it is possible because the force it represents is inherent in the order of the universe and not foreign to it.

This brings us to the frank recognition of the supernatural as a part of the natural order. Our definition of miracle, as well as our idea of what constitutes a miracle, will undoubtedly differ in many respects from what men in other centuries regarded as miraculous, for we live in a larger intellectual world than they, and understand, as they could not, the inviolability of law. We have only to imagine how past generations would have regarded wireless telegraphy and the navigation of the air to put ourselves into their mental attitude toward such marvelous conquests of the forces which are none the less mysterious because human minds have discovered some of the laws which govern them. Nature is the storehouse of power. But is power a material thing? Is what we call the "natural order" less divine because a few of its secrets have been opened to us?

It must be remembered that, with all of our knowledge, much remains as yet unknown. Vast regions of mystery lie all about us in the world we think we know so well, which call for faith as truly as does the realm we call religion.

The rise of modern science has taken us into the laboratory where the divine Spirit is at work, and has bidden us revise our ideas and definitions of the supernatural. Christian thinking is putting God into the center of this vast universe and is feeling his immanence in a world which he is continually creating; it is reading the laws of nature as the laws of God and is certain of the existence of other laws, as yet beyond our understanding, which operate, nevertheless, with the ones we have learned to rely upon in such ways as to bring about results which cannot be explained by natural causes. It is far more difficult in the twentieth century than it was in the nineteenth to say, "Miracles do not happen," because our century is more aware of the supernatural than was the last.

If we did not believe in the existence and operation of unknown spiritual laws, we could never pray, for every true prayer is the assertion of the reality of the supernatural. It is probably far more true to the fact to call this world lying about us the "superhuman," for to the Christian the supernatural should be the truly natural, as it is the recognition of the presence and activity of God in the realm of human life. We need revived in us the element of expectancy. Too many of us have ceased to expect anything from God. He is so relegated to the past that we go through the world seldom discovering his presence, and yet he is waiting at every turn of the road to meet us. We need to explore the term which is so often used in the Bible, "the living God," and translate its truth into our own religious experience, for in this, after all, is summed up the whole problem of miracle. To believe really in the living God is to believe in his unceasing activity in the affairs of human life.

I. The Miracles of Jesus.

1. Their presence in the gospel narrative.

The sources before us for study tell us that closely connected with the teaching ministry of Jesus there was a continual healing ministry. Notice how this is summarized by Matthew (4:23).

The exercise of supernatural power by Jesus is an integral part of the record. All attempts to eliminate the supernatural from the gospels have failed to leave behind anything convincing or satisfying. Jesus has aroused our expectations, and faith is justified in excepting from him something different from that which the ordinary man has to give, and it has not been put to shame.

"The power to work miracles could never prove its possessor to be a person so extraordinary as we conceive Christ to be; but Christ once conceived to be the extraordinary person we believe him to be, miracles become to him both natural and necessary. They are the symbols of the reality he is, the appropriate expression of the force he embodies. They complete the picture of the divine goodness he manifests, show that its action in the physical is in essential harmony with its action in the moral sphere. The natural action of moral beings is moral action; the miracles of Christ are physical witnesses to his essential spirit and aims, therefore formally physical, but materially moral. They, as it were, personalize for us the moral action of God, show how He acts toward the miseries and weaknesses of his creatures, and thus become essential elements in the declaration of the Father made by the Only Begotten."*

* Studies in the Life of Christ, Fairbairn, p. 151.

In your study of the records of Jesus' life and work, notice the effect his personality had upon people. Notice the element of expectancy he created wherever he went, and the appeal which was made to his ability. The words addressed to him by the leper, recorded in Mark 1:40—"If thou wilt, thou canst," reflect the recognition of this power which was felt by all who needed to draw upon it.

2. The character of the miracles of Jesus.

Into what two classes can they be divided?
Which class is the more numerous?
What object is always in view?

3. Jesus' attitude toward his power.

To discuss this satisfactorily, we must go back to the temptation, for the question of the moral use of power formed the central feature of that initial conflict. It raises again the question of the means to be used in establishing the Kingdom. That Jesus regarded his "mighty words" as a part of his mission as Messiah seems abundantly evident, for the Kingdom gospel included Kingdom blessings as a natural result (see Matt. 11:1–6). The character of the Kingdom, however, determined the nature of the miracles and imposed a limitation upon them. Power was never used by Jesus to satisfy curiosity or craving for the marvelous. In Mark 8:11–13 and Matt. 16:1–4 there is recorded a distinct rebuke of the request for a sign which had nothing in view but the satisfying of a morbid instinct.

Examine the miracles of Jesus to discover what you think was his own attitude toward them. What part did they have in his Kingdom message? What did he always have to guard against in the use of his power?

4. The personal relation between Jesus and those he healed.

Collect the various instances of healing which are recorded in the synoptic gospels and study them to discover Jesus' method of dealing with the sick.

Compare Matt. 9: 28, 29, with Mark 6: 5–6.

Does this indicate that Jesus recognized a law in his healing work and suggest the moral use of power in the divine economy?

Take the incident recorded in Mark 5: 25–34 as typical of Jesus' attitude toward individuals who appealed to him for physical relief and use it to illustrate the principles which characterized his healing ministry.

II. The Availability of Power in the Kingdom of God.

Review this study bringing your thought to focus on the main thesis that this universe is a spiritual order, through which spiritual forces work; that God, the creative Life, is immanent in the world and able to reveal his presence. This conception of the world of life gives us a flexible universe, instead of a rigid one; a growing world rather than a completed one. The greatest spiritual fact in the world is the fact of personality—this remains the incomprehensible mystery, the daily miracle.

Two incontestable miracles challenge the world—the Person of Jesus Christ, and the life of the Christian in whom the spirit of Jesus lives. One is the "mystery of godliness"; the other is the mystery of "the power that worketh in us"; both demonstrate the presence of the divine life in the world, God in intimate connection with human life, first in his incarnate Son and then in "the many sons" who re-incarnate the life of the Only Begotten.

This intimate connection of God as Father with men united to him in a kingdom of sonship means the availability of power for the purpose of that Kingdom. Our Lord sets this before us in these statements: "Have faith in God," "Ask and ye shall receive," and "According to your faith be it unto you." The failure to use this power is a failure of faith.

STUDY XV

THE CONFESSION OF MESSIAHSHIP IN THE DISCIPLE CIRCLE

It is a most happy sign of the healthy reality which the life of Jesus is gaining in men's thoughts in these modern days, that the idea of the development of his Consciousness, the gradual growth into the knowledge and use of his own nature, is no longer an idea that bewilders and shocks the believer in our Lord's divinity. . . . The seventeenth century believed in the divinity of Christ, but its belief in the divine Christ was weak, and the belief in the human Christ was well nigh lost. . . . It is because Jesus today is intensely real, intensely human to us, that we welcome and do not dread the truth of increase and development from childhood to the full strength and stature of a man.—*Phillips Brooks.*

STUDY XV—THE CONFESSION OF MESSIAHSHIP IN THE DISCIPLE CIRCLE.

Mark 8: 27–30; Matt. 16: 13–20; Luke 9: 18–21.

I. The Withdrawal of Jesus into the North.

Mark 7: 24–8: 26; Matt. 15: 21–16: 12.

We are more or less vaguely conscious that change of some kind is near; this unusual procedure of Jesus' must have in it something more than the ordinary preaching journey with which we are so familiar, for it takes him away up into the north, out of the bounds of Jewish territory altogether. The clue is not hard to find, and it tells us that our feeling is justified: a change has come, the undertow of the tide which is to bear him far has already set in, and from now on we are hastening toward the end.

Mark shows us why the change we have felt is inevitable, for he places this withdrawal of Jesus after the discussion of ceremonial defilement precipitated by the Pharisees and used by Jesus to abrogate the law of clean and unclean meats (Mark 7). This assertion of liberty in matters pertaining to the Law widened the chasm already yawning between the religious leaders and Jesus, and brought into its death struggle the conflict between the letter and the spirit which had been going on from the beginning of his ministry. Thus there lay behind this withdrawal of Jesus the Pharisaic controversy, with all of its hopelessness, and the realization of the grim

consequences concealed in its relentless venom, the shadow of which was even now falling upon the pathway of the Son of Man. All of this and more, particularly the necessity of time to teach the disciples, was pressing upon the spirit of Jesus and sent him for a season into the less frequented district of the far north, where he would be away from the pursuit of his enemies and have the much needed opportunity quietly to instruct the twelve.

Read the section from Mark 7:24 to 8:26, in which this writer, in his rapid way, says so much in so incidental a manner. See if you can find more than a series of incidents following each other in rapid movement. Discern if you can the outlines of a portrait growing under the hand of this word painter. Learn to use the material in the gospels as a transparency, revealing the one commanding figure whom the words describe. This is high art, but it is an attainment to be worked for with unflagging zeal. The secret of success here is not so much a mental process as a spiritual sensitiveness, which sees into the heart of things and discerns the face of Christ beneath the surface of language.

Follow on your map the geographical characteristics of the northland. Endeavor to imagine how the lofty peaks of the Lebanon range must have ministered to the spirit of Jesus, which was bruised by the sharp attacks of men and filled with concern for the faithful friends who were then by his side.

Do you think you have ever entered sympathetically into the mind and heart of the one you call your Lord, as you have followed his experiences in the days of his flesh? In our gratitude for one who drank the cup of suffering to its dregs, let us not be unmindful of the cost

to him, or take for granted this sacrament of a life lived as well as of a life laid down. The whole life of Jesus is God's perpetual sacrament to men, through which he speaks to the heart of humanity and by which he draws humanity to himself.

How impossible it was for Jesus to secrete himself or to carry out his desire for seclusion for the sake of the disciples is briefly stated in the terse words of Mark: "He entered into a house and would have no man know it; and he could not be hid" (7:24).

In the request of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:25–30), what is it you hear, the voice of the woman pleading for her child, or the quiet words of Jesus which contain so much that is baffling to us, baffling largely because we do not bring to their interpretation the whole mind of the one who is speaking? What do you think he meant? Does he hear in this request the voice of a great world which was already on his heart? Does his attitude suggest a serene faith in the purpose of his Father larger than the demand of this one incident, including all that this involves? Is anything gained by moving faster than God's purpose allows? Meditate over this and try to follow the thought of Jesus here.

Filial obedience is the opportunity of the spirit, the one unfailing channel of service. Jesus lived and worked in the consciousness of sonship and utter dependence upon his Father. Do not fail to observe how this reverence for his own limitation, which was fulfilling his Father's will at this stage of his work, brought the result he desired, the faith of a pagan woman which assured to her the blessing she craved.

Another stroke of the brush and new scenes arise, this time the place being much farther south, near to the

familiar Sea of Galilee, in the district on the east coast called Decapolis, a region made up of Greek cities characterized by a life peculiarly their own (Mark 7: 31–37).

The healing of the deaf-mute gives us another picture of Jesus working with an individual. What method in Jesus' healing does this illustrate? Mark records the sigh or groan which escaped the lips of Jesus. It is suggestive, for it is the only occurrence of this word in the gospels and conveys the idea of pain. There was a large vicarious element in the healing which Jesus did. Is there anything real in our own contact with limitation, pain, or grief that does not have in it a vicarious element?

Notice the parallel account in Matthew (15: 29–31), which gives an extended healing ministry in this same district. What does the reference, "they glorified the God of Israel," indicate?

Again the Pharisees are in the foreground, this time asking for a sign, and are refused. Out of this grows a conversation with the disciples which is in the nature of a warning against the three perils which constitute the world-spirit of that time, and of all time (Mark 8: 11–21; Matt. 16: 1–12). How would you state this? In what ways are these perils present in our world today?

Do not fail to notice the obtuse response of the disciples (vs. 16). There is an utter lack of imagination and perception. Does this seem like a promising set of men? Yet upon them great issues depend. There is surely great need of teaching and of awakened sensibilities. Feel the disappointment in the heart of Jesus as he exclaims, "Do ye not yet understand?"

II. The Confession of Messiahship by the Disciples.

Mark 8: 27–30; Matt. 16: 13–20; Luke 9: 18–21.

The words which preserve this first confession of faith in the significance of Jesus are brief, and occupy only a few lines of print, but they have been prepared for by the whole preceding history and vindicate the patient method of Jesus in developing faith in himself in these men who have been with him from the beginning. To appreciate the pivotal nature of this occasion, one must look backward and forward, but one's look must be guided by an understanding of more than the sequence of events, an understanding which only the mind of Christ can supply.

Make this survey for yourself in the light of this interpreting Mind. Gather up in your thought all that lies behind this conversation at Caesarea Philippi, the exact condition of the present, and the unmistakable presage of the future.

The time element here is sharply defined; it is a time of crisis, fraught with momentous issues. The entire life of Jesus shows a profound understanding of the significance of the time element. In the Synoptic Gospels we do not meet the words so often used in the Fourth Gospel, "Mine hour hath not yet come," but we meet the same recognition of what these words imply—the understanding of the stage of the divine purpose which is at hand, and the obedient acceptance of its responsibilities, both actively and passively.

Perfect harmony of life comes from being thus in accord with the divine will. This harmony our Lord revealed in everything he said and did—it is a part of the very essence of his being. Meditate over this idea in its application to your own life and see if you can trace the discords and the failure to recognize the significance

of occasions to a lack of adjustment to the Divine mind and purpose.

With the realization of the critical importance of this conversation at Caesarea Philippi well in mind, come to the study of the first confession of faith in the preëminence of Jesus. Notice the way in which the conversation is introduced, particularly Luke's touch (Luke 9 ; 18). What does the first question call out? What place did current opinion give to Jesus? Was it a negligible one? Was it adequate? Why do you think Jesus asked it? Did the answer satisfy him?

Jesus never before had asked men to state their opinion of him, which makes the very question momentous. Feel the eagerness and anxiety with which Jesus asks the next question. What was it that Peter confessed? Recall the meaning the term "the Christ" had on Jewish lips. What was the difference between this declaration and the one previously made? How had the disciples arrived at this conviction?

Reflect upon the persistence of these two questions. In some form they have met and challenged the attention of every generation since they were first asked. Now as well as then, the answer to them holds spiritual issues of eternal significance. What we think about Christ determines not only our theology, that is, our religious thinking, but our life as well, for our manner of life is the outgrowth of our thinking, the demonstration of our philosophy.

What do the words of Jesus recorded in Matt. 16: 17 imply as to the quality of mind which is essential in interpreting him? Think about this until you see how indispensable spiritual insight is. How can it be acquired and developed?

"Oh could I tell, ye surely would believe it!
Oh could I only say what I have seen!
How should I tell or how can ye receive it,
How, till He bringeth you where I have been?"

—*F. W. H. Myers, St. Paul.*

STUDY XVI

THE UNFOLDING OF THE NATURE OF MESSIAHSHIP

The trouble which so many have in finding any power in truths that they believe is that, strange as it may seem, Christianity is to a multitude of people a purely abstract system. It has lost its personal aspect. But Christianity is what? The service of Christ. Its very essence is its personality. It is all built about a Person. Take him out and it all falls to pieces. Just because he *has* been taken out of the religion which many of us call our Christianity, just for that reason is our Christianity a poor thing of the remote brain, bringing no peace to our hearts and no strength to our hands, no comfort to our sorrow and no benediction to our joy.—*Phillips Brooks.*

STUDY XVI—THE UNFOLDING OF THE NATURE OF MESSIAHSHIP.

Mark 8: 31–38; Matt. 16: 21–28; Luke 9: 22–27.

The confession of Messiahship by Peter reveals the change in Messianic ideals which the contact of the disciples with Jesus had slowly effected. It is the triumph of disciple faith in Jesus himself. He had made his impress and to him they gave their loyalty.

How much did the disciples really understand of what Messiahship involved to Jesus? Is there here a suggestion that our heads do not always keep pace with our hearts? An imperfect knowledge does not destroy the validity of a real faith in Jesus himself, and is acccepted by him with gratitude and hope, for to the loving heart can be revealed things which are veiled from those whose hearts are cold and unresponsive.

Why were the disciples forbidden to share with others their newly confessed belief?

I. The True Nature of Messiahship Unveiled.

Mark 8: 31–33.

Meditate on these startling words. For the first time Jesus puts into language what has been held in his heart as his own understanding of what Messiahship meant. His holiest ideal, his deepest consciousness concerning his own mission, he now shares with the men who have confessed their belief in him. How

eagerly he must have watched the effect of this unexpected and terrible announcement!

Do you hear again the clear and unmistakable notes which rang out for the first time in the Judean wilderness as the Messiah faced his mission and the way of its accomplishment, notes which continually reappeared like the motif in a majestic symphony? Before the eyes of Jesus there rose during those days of solitude and followed him as his inseparable companion, the mysterious figure painted by the prophet of the Exile (Isa. 53), a figure which lay hidden for centuries, inexplicable and almost forgotten, until he came who saw that this obscure and suffering Servant bore the lineaments of the Messiah, the Messiah Jesus knew himself to be.

Once again we are face to face with the consciousness of Jesus concerning himself and his mission. What place did death have in it? Was death to him defeat and finality? What other element do you feel was in his own outlook?

Study the effect of this announcement upon the disciples? Did their idea of Messiahship include any of these things? In Jesus' rebuke directed to Peter, ponder over the striking antithesis in the words, "the things of God" and "the things of men."

II. The True Nature of Discipleship.

Mark 8: 34–38; Luke 9: 23–26.

Discipleship needed defining in terms commensurate with such a master. His mind has been laid bare; discipleship must share that mind sympathetically. Christ's greatest interpreter laid down the norm which every generation of Christians since has recognized as supreme in thought and action, "the mind of Christ" (I. Cor.

2:16). If this mind were freely operating in the lives of Christians, what changes do you think would come in the world's life? If this mind were actively influencing our own personal lives, what differences would there be in our habits of thought and speech and action?

What does Jesus state is the first and determining element in discipleship?

How would you describe the essence of Christianity? Does your definition start where Jesus started in his unfolding of discipleship? What is the dominating spirit of discipleship?

What place has sacrifice in life? What do you mean by sacrifice? Is it the same thing as self-denial? The same as self-surrender? Does this conception of life destroy personality? Is it oppressive or liberating in its result? Can you discover here an eternal law of life which Jesus lifts into its true place?

Can you find in these few words the large setting of man's nature and destiny?

"Let us not confuse Christian seriousness and asceticism, since for no consideration would we be willing to weaken the serious note in the gospel for the sake of accepting the existing standards of civilization or to encourage enthusiasm for the level of worldly life, but neither do we desire to weaken the gospel down to a contempt of the world, or to a disgust of civilization. I am bold enough to state the case as a paradox. Asceticism implies less than the demands made upon us by the gospel. Asceticism, moreover, means a sum of renunciations; it requires only a sum of renunciations; it requires only a sum of performances that are meritorious. But the gospel requires the full surrender of the whole man to God and to the Lord. The gospel requires,

no, rather it creates, this surrender. . . . Therefore, not sacrifice but self surrender, not renunciation but faith, not asceticism but the gospel."*

III. The Unveiling of the Messiah.

Mark 9: 1–13; Matt. 17: 1–13; Luke 9: 28–36.

From the way of the cross to the glory of the mountain top! A complete and sudden change! Is there an underlying continuity? Unless we can find it, we shall miss the unity which characterized the life of the Son of Man. Is the shock of readjustment to the rarefied atmosphere of the holy mountain the result of a curious mental attitude toward the glory latent in sacrifice? These two scenes and the experiences for which they stand both have a place in the orderly sequence of the life of Jesus.

Was this event, which we call the "Transfiguration," a vision or an experience?

Where do you find the unifying element which relates it to the entire life of Jesus?

Do not fail to reflect upon Luke's words, "As he was praying." What was it that the disciples saw? Was there something greater that they did not see? Was this experience for them primarily or for Jesus?

What august reality did it disclose to them?

Can you recall any evidence in the New Testament that its memory lingered in the minds of the disciples?

How do you explain the appearance of these two personalities connected with the past?

Does it suggest a union between this world and the world of spirit? Have you ever really united the two in

* The Gospel and Asceticism, von Dobschutz, *Constructive Quarterly*, December 1913.

your thinking? If this were done what effect would such a conception have upon the world in which we live?

"When he wanted company that could understand his passion thoughts he was obliged to hold converse with the spirits of just men made perfect; for as far as mortal men were concerned he had to be content to finish his great work without the comfort of being understood until it was accomplished. Verily the Son of Man was most lonely as he passed through the dark valley."*

In the voice which came, what familiar words were heard? What significant addition? The supreme authority is no longer Moses and the prophets, but the Son. The old era is closed, and with it the old authority; the new era has opened, and in it is heard a living voice, a supreme Person who is the authoritative and final spokesman of God.

What effect did this scene have upon the disciples? Notice the charge of silence. Why was it imposed?

The identifying of John the Baptist with Elijah indicates the way our Lord interpreted the ancient scripture. How would you state this interpretation?

IV. The Need at the Foot of the Mountain. Vs. 14–29.

Here again is one of those vivid word pictures for which Mark is famous. Endeavor to call the scene to your imagination and feel the tension which the circumstances created.

Study this handling of the situation by Jesus. Why did Jesus demand faith? What did he mean by faith? Do you mean the same thing when you speak of it?

Was Jesus right when he said, "All things are possible to him that believeth"? What did he mean by "all

* The Training of the Twelve, Bruce, p. 193.

things''? Why is nothing possible to him who has no faith in the availability of God's power?

Meditate upon the pathetic question of the disciples. "Why could we not cast it out?" and the answer of Jesus, which points to the cause of failure.

Notice the absence of the words found in the King James version, "and fasting." This eliminates any idea of asceticism.

Miracles of any kind, that is, the active working of God, the availability of his power, are possible only to the praying person.

V. Disciple Teaching. Vs. 30–49.

Notice the second announcement of the coming Passion. "The glory upon the holy mount" probably obscured the unwelcome disclosure of suffering; therefore it is again affirmed. Notice the human touch given to the unwillingness of the disciples to ask for an explanation—"They were afraid to ask."

Capernaum once more and for the last time holds Jesus for a brief period on his way to Jerusalem. It is here—the city of his adoption, where he tarries in some familiar house and teaches the disciples a few of the elemental lessons in discipleship. Study this section not only for the subjects which were talked about, but chiefly for the way Jesus dealt with them. Dwell especially upon the last one, that of the necessity for self-discipline and the certainty of retribution (vs. 43–49).

These words are earnest, searching, solemnizing. Self-discipline is possible and it is necessary and upon us there is placed the responsibility of exercising it. Do not lose the reality of this necessity by a destructive literalism; a hand, a foot, an eye are precious possessions and

the person is maimed without them, but there is something greater—the personality itself. This needs to be guarded with the utmost care, because of its eternal nature. What principle do you deduce from these warnings?

"The hell of fire" is an expression which is rooted in an old Hebrew association with a valley called the Valley of Hinnom, a deep gorge on the southwest of Jerusalem. See 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; II. Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31, 32; 19. The idea of the place became associated with the conception of future punishment.

Here again a crude literalism destroys the reality of the solemn warning. Eternal fire cannot be dismissed with a simile, it has a spiritual reality more awful than any material flames. There is such a thing as retribution—the results of sin pass on into the timeless order, for we live in a moral universe.

STUDY XVII

THE ENTRANCE OF THE MESSIAH INTO JERUSALEM

Blessed He that in His love lowered Himself that He might redeem the human race! Blessed the King that made Himself poor that He might enrich the needy! Blessed He that came to fulfil the emblems and types of the Prophets! Blessed He that gladdened the creation with the wealth and treasure of His Father! Blessed He whose glory those dumb by nature sung in Hosannahs! Blessed He to whom the little children sung a new glory in hymns! Blessed be the new King who came that new born babes might glorify Him! Blessed He unto whom the children stammered songs, and lauded Him amongst the disciples! Amen.—*St. Ephrem, the Syrian. Fourth Century.*

STUDY XVII—THE ENTRANCE OF THE MESSIAH INTO JERUSALEM.

Mark 10–12; Matt. 19–22; Luke 19: 28–48.

I. An Incident Along the Way.

Luke gives us the background of Jesus' consciousness (Luke 9: 51) as he begins his journey to the holy city. He is moving in the thought of the coming baptism of suffering which awaits him there. Mark calls attention to a certain aloofness in the manner of Jesus (Mark 10: 32) and its solemnizing effect upon the disciples. Speech at last breaks the tense silence and for the third time the disciples hear the unwelcome words which they are unwilling to believe.

Notice the circumstantial details of this third announcement of the Passion. Luke records the unresponsiveness of the Twelve (Luke 18: 34), while Mark gives the request of the two brothers for the chief places in the coming kingdom, which reflects the abysmal depth of human self-seeking in the presence of the most moving demonstration of sacrifice the world has ever seen (Mark 10: 35–41).

Ponder this conversation well: it holds a mirror which reflects the grim possibility latent in human nature. The same element is constantly re-appearing in our day, but it receives its true coloring only as it is viewed in the presence of the eyes of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' treatment of these disciples, notice the absence of all impatience. When is it hardest for us to

deal kindly and patiently with people? Measure your own attitude alongside of your Lord's. Does it compare favorably? Does it compare at all?

Here was a complete misunderstanding of all he had been trying to teach them, and what was more disheartening still, a wrong standard of valuations. To what does Jesus trace the request? What test does he apply? What does this double symbolism of "the cup" and "the baptism" mean? Cf. Luke 12:50.

How do these words interpret Jesus' own deep consciousness of the meaning of what lies ahead? What does Jesus promise them and what does he withhold? How do you interpret these words? Why did the disciples resent the request which their friends had made?

Study the use Jesus makes of the incident to teach what lies at the heart of the Kingdom he is establishing. What complete change of thought and standard does this demand? How far do you think it dominates the life of Christians today?

Meditate on Jesus' declaration of his own Mission, especially upon the word "ransom." What did he mean by it?

As the mind of Jesus moves in the thought of his Passion, he plainly indicates that violence will be used against him, and at the same time speaks of the voluntary yielding up of his life. "The entrance of this voluntary element modifies the whole conception, changes the death from a martyrdom to a sacrifice. Sacrifice is possible only where there is perfect freedom, where a man surrenders what he has both the right and the power to withhold."*

* Philosophy of the Christian Religion, Fairbairn, p. 408.

II. Entrance into the City.

Mark 11, Matt. 21, Luke 19: 28–44.

The part of the history we are now entering upon brings us into scenes which are interwoven with some of our most sacred experiences. The danger with all familiar things is that their very familiarity tends to dim our vision and deaden our sensibilities. This is especially true of the history before us. We need to see it with fresh eyes and to feel it with renewed hearts, which are in sympathy with the mind of Christ.

As we read the record we are conscious of a change in Jesus. There are definite arrangements carefully planned and carried out; a certain sense of finality invests all he says and does with a significance above the ordinary.

What additions does the Fourth Gospel supply which help us to complete our picture of these days? Notice particularly the exquisite scene which is sketched for us in John 12: 1–8, where for a brief time the gathering forces of hatred and violence are lost sight of, and Jesus is encircled in the loving devotion of his friends. From this home where his heart found rest in human friendship, he went out to face Jerusalem and Calvary.

In what capacity does Jesus enter the Holy City? Do you see in this entry a formal identification of himself with Messiahship? Is there any change in Jesus' Messianic ideal? State this ideal again to yourself, that it may be clear in your mind. What did kingship mean to him? What was the effect upon the people? Notice the way in which Matthew speaks of this effect (Matt. 21: 10). The crowd bursts out in Messianic language and renders to this lowly figure riding into the city of David the homage of the moment. It is significant that

the homage is accepted with the ascriptions of Messiahship which it contains.

Luke presents a companion picture which gives the other side to this scene—the inner, personal side (Luke 19:37–44). A Messiah stricken with grief, a weeping Sovereign! There is no elation in the heart of the Son of Man, for he knows what Messiahship means. We shall never know what the suffering of Christ means to us in the Kingdom of God until we have some appreciation of what it meant to him; until his interpretive mind falls upon it and illumines it for us. "Jesus consciously plans a royal entry into Jerusalem, when he knows that he rides to his death. It is his way of proclaiming his faith that through self-sacrifice he will reign, through service be Lord of all."*

III. The Messiah in Jerusalem.

If we did not have the record of the Fourth Gospel to correct the impression, we should not know that Jesus was in Jerusalem at any time during his ministry until the last week, for the Synoptics make no reference to his presence at any of the feasts. But the Fourth Gospel does give us the record of his presence at three Passovers, as well as at the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Dedication, and at least one unnamed feast (John 2:13–25; 6:1–14; 13:1–11; 7:1–44; 10:22–31; 5:1–9).

The light which the Fourth Gospel throws upon his previous visits to Jerusalem makes the final entrance given by the Synoptics more full of significance than it otherwise would be, without the background of many

* Social Aspects of the Cross, Coffin, p. 81.

others, for there is an element of finality in it and an authority which is commanding.

An attitude of Messianic authority on the part of Jesus is exhibited in the cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:15–18). The Fourth Gospel records a similar act at the beginning of the ministry (John 2:13–22). Is there anything incongruous in two acts like this, or are we to see one act placed by the Fourth Gospel as an introduction to his history, containing as it does a symbol of the entire attitude of Jesus? Is it a question of position merely in the Synoptic and Johannine narratives, or is there a generic relation to Jesus' vocation which is more determining?

In this act of judgment on the part of the One who was in the city of David now in the capacity of Messiah, we see the exercise of power in a purely moral way, entirely devoid of any force. This is true to the consistent ideal of Messiahship which Jesus realized in himself. It was this very moral authority which excited the animosity of the religious leaders and forced them to challenge it.

Observe the way in which the challenge is met by Jesus (Mark 11:27–33 and Matt. 21:23–27). Did the religious leaders have more in mind than this last impressive exhibition within the precincts of the Temple? How does Jesus turn the question? Did he answer his questioners, or did they answer their own questions? What is implied in Jesus' question?

With this background in mind, study the three parables of judgment which follow this conversation as Matthew records it (Matt. 21:28–22:14). Against whom are these parables directed? How do they reflect the situation? What solemn warning do they contain? What supreme consciousness do they reveal?

IV. A Series of Entangling Questions.

Matt. 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17; Mark 12:18–27; Luke 20:27–40; Matt. 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–34.

State these questions to yourself and notice how much they include. Keep in mind the motive which lay behind them. Study Jesus' method in answering them. Here is pedagogy of high order, discernment of unerring vision, and patience of divine quality. Notice how Jesus unifies life around the religious ideal. To believe in God in Jesus' teaching unifies all seeming divisions in life; the citizen of the Kingdom of God recognizes as a part of the divine order the political order, under which he lives. There is no "whether," "or"—no "Shall we give or shall we not give?" The citizen of the Kingdom of God sees a unity and continuity in his personal life and relationships and cannot separate the here and hereafter, the now and then, for God is only the God of living personalities, and all in every sphere of his universe live unto him. The citizen of the Kingdom acknowledges that the greatest requirement of life is to live filially with God and fraternally with man; this is also the supreme obligation of religion.

One question remains, and it is one asked by Jesus himself (Mark 12:35–37; Matt. 22:41–45). It is a question which tests the Messianic expectations of the Pharisees. How does Jesus turn the question from the physical to the spiritual? In so turning it, how does he reveal his own understanding of Messiahship?

We have been in the thick of controversy, the scenes have moved rapidly before our eyes, the hostilities of men have left their impress upon us, we have felt the hot breath of their hatred. The time element seems to recede and become lost in the universal history of hu-

manity, for we have reflected in these pages of the gospel narrative the passions of men steeped in antagonism, as they have touched and been judged by the sacrificial life of Jesus Christ.

STUDY XVIII

PREPARING THE DISCIPLES FOR THE FUTURE

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me.

STUDY XVIII—PREPARING THE DISCIPLES FOR THE FUTURE.

Mark 13; Matthew 24; Luke 21.

The words in which Jesus clothes these warnings and his directions to the disciples concerning their attitude toward the circumstances which will confront them in the future, are recorded in the chapters before us. But instead of being simple, as most of Jesus' previous teaching has been, this particular discourse is almost baffling to our understanding, because of the form into which it is cast. This has given rise to two extreme attitudes toward it; first, a literalism which creates an unreal situation in obscuring the true thought of Jesus, making it inconsistent with his previous Kingdom teaching, and secondly, a refusal to accord to Jesus the utterance of words like these at all, because of their unlikeness to his usual style of expression. In the first attitude the difference is created by the method of interpretation, in the second by the content itself.

In approaching the question it is necessary to understand the literary character of this discourse. It belongs to what is known as apocalyptic writing, a literary movement which began shortly after the middle of the last century before the Christian era, and continued for over a hundred years after, from about 165 B. C. to about 135 A. D. We have in our Bible only two examples of apocalyptic literature. One is the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, and the other the book of Revelation

in the New. But in the Jewish writings which are known as the apocrypha there are many examples of this school of literary genius, and its peculiarities of thought and expression were familiar to the Jews in Jesus' day, and to Jesus himself. The term "apocalyptic" suggests the character of the writing; it means "taking the cover from," an unveiling. There is a description of spiritual realities in the form of strange symbols and excessive imagery. Read Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and 20 as examples of this characteristic. See if you can detect any similarity in style between these chapters and the ones we are discussing in the synoptic gospels.

Could you reduce any of this imagery to literalism? Is literalism necessary to reality? Jesus is endeavoring to say something here which prosaic words could never convey. Is it not altogether likely, then, that he called to his aid a form of expression which would unfetter his thought and set it free in the exalted idealism of poetry? It must be remembered that when these words were spoken Jesus was under the control of a strong emotion. His language would naturally be influenced by this, and fall into a form which was ready at hand—the language and symbolism of an exalted poetry. In so doing, Jesus followed the impulse which we also feel when our thought refuses to be confined by prose and seeks its liberty in poetry. "He flung the reserved elements of his teaching into symbolic form, using the current and familiar imagery of Jewish apocalypse."*

With this in mind, come to the study of these words of Jesus, endeavoring to follow the swift movement of his thought as he travels from the present, with its temporal, changing conditions and apparent defeat, to the eternal

* Christianity in the Modern World, Cairns, p. 200.

and stable future, where the triumph of the Divine purposes will be realized and knit together in himself, the Son of Man.

In the face of death and seeming failure, the faith of Jesus rises serene and confident above the ruin which threatens, and he would prepare his faithful, but weak, disciples for the dark days which are so near, which hold momentous changes for them and for the world. Matthew gives us the immediate background of these words in the lament over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37–39), which expresses the thwarted desires to do for them what love would have done but could not.

Observe in the opening words of Mark 13 how the disciples would divert his mind from the burden he is carrying on his heart to the great stones of the Temple and its buildings. This was Herod's temple, built to conciliate the Jews, magnificent in its glistening white marble and gold, "appearing like a snow mountain, topped with golden pinnacles."

Consider the two different viewpoints from which the disciples and Jesus were looking at the Temple. What did it stand for to these men? What did it represent to Jesus?

Listen to the startling announcement which Jesus makes regarding the future of this most stable looking structure (vs. 2).

In Jesus' reply to the question of the disciples, what does he name first as the greatest peril? (vs. 5–8).

There was a widespread and deep-seated force already at work in the nation, which Jesus knew held its ultimate destruction, a once religious ideal become materialized and debased. "It was precisely the crude Messianic prejudices of the people that formed the terrible political

danger, the shadow of which lay always on the shrewd, practical mind of the Sadducee, and which, too, was ever present to the eyes of Christ."*

There is a reference here to political disturbances ending in wars. What period in history do these words refer to, the time immediately ahead, or a remote future? Were these words spoken to satisfy curiosity or to fortify the mind and heart? Notice Jesus' time element—"the end is not yet."

Do not be stricken with panic. How would you name the second omen?

The third warning is personal (vs. 9–13). There is no cloaking the danger or suffering which lies before the disciples.

Note the twice repeated words, "for my sake." In the presence of death for himself and suffering for his disciples, Jesus reminds them of his own supreme place in their allegiance, and his significance in the world.

What two qualities does Jesus refer to as essential in that time of testing? Compare Luke 21:19. What is meant by winning our souls or our lives? Why are these two qualities still the essential ones in a Christian's life?

What would you say is the subject of vs. 14–23? What impression do the words convey? What event in Jewish history carried out the substance of this foreshadowing? Notice the reference again to false Messiahs.

Compare Mark 13:14 with Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11 and notice the phrase, "the abomination that maketh desolate." To what did the writer of Daniel refer?†

* Christianity in the Modern World, Cairns, p. 192.

† The student is referred to A History of the Jewish People, Riggs, chaps. 2 and 3, and to I. Maccabees 1:29–64.

Is there a clue to what Jesus meant in Luke 21:20?*

Is the subject of vs. 24–27 and the parallel Matthew 24:29–31 the same as the preceding paragraph? What is the subject of this section?

Notice here the use of highly symbolical language. Notice the similarity in language between "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" and the vision recorded in Daniel 7:13–14. What do you think the connection was in the mind of Jesus? Observe the imagery of a convulsed universe. What do you think these words are intended to describe? What do you understand the "coming of the Son of Man" to mean?

This is what is called the "Parousia," or Second Advent. One of the difficulties in interpretation in this particular chapter is the apparent close relation in which the Second Advent is made to stand with the catastrophe which was to fall upon Jerusalem. In a certain sense they are related, but only partially.

What moral significance is there in this parable of the fig tree?

What did Jesus mean by saying, "This generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished"? Are we to understand the word "accomplished" to mean consummation or a new beginning? How has history answered the question?

Do not fail to notice the assertion of Jesus that the time was not known to him. Have we any right, then, to attempt to fix the time of an event which our Lord himself declared was hidden in the councils of his Father?

What does the coming of the Lord mean to you? Is it confined to one event in the past or future? Our conception of what the coming of Christ means will

* A History of the Jewish People, Riggs, chaps. 9, 10.

depend largely upon our conception of his significance in the unfolding and developing purpose of God in the Kingdom which Jesus came to establish. If Jesus is to us the one through whom all of God's purposes are fulfilled, his coming cannot be confined to any one event, but will be larger than any one or all combined.

Think over some events which have held for the world a real coming of Christ. Would you be satisfied with no further coming? What does the relation of Christ to the world demand?

"The Kingdom is not only an ethical, it is an evangelical idea. Therefore in the Kingdom's darkest hour it was necessary that its founder should renew in the most solemn way his assurance that the hour was advancing when the Kingdom should come in glory and in power, and manifest its true character in the great spheres of cosmical life, as it had already done under more straitened and lowly conditions.

"Whether the second coming implies a return of the incarnate Jesus, a literal physical re-appearance on the field of history, is a question altogether secondary. That the phrase, 'Ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven,' does not necessarily imply this is clear from his saying to the high priest, 'Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God and coming in the clouds of heaven,' where the language is obviously symbolical, and implies simply that he is God's vice-gerent, and ever and again 'comes' in special manifestations of the Divine power. But while this is so, the whole drift of the apocalyptic teaching of Jesus appears to me to imply further that this process reaches at last a culmination and termination. The separate 'comings' of Christ in his providence are thus

to be viewed as 'moments' or 'stadia' in the realization of a Divine purpose in which they all at last reach their consummation. This consummation is the true and perfect coming of the Lord."*

"This whole view of the future necessarily carries the disciple beyond religious individualism. It is a practical assertion that the entire domain of human life belongs to Christ, not only that inner world in which each disciple walks alone with his God, but also the great outward world of human society in all its varied forms. The man who is in earnest with the idea of the coming of Christ to claim his own in glory and power, who believes therefore in the victory of the Kingdom of God as the goal of history, must necessarily have his whole outlook upon human life conditioned thereby. He will have his thoughts directed not merely to his own spiritual state, his personal shortcomings, attainments, and hopes, but to a great objective end, the winning of the world for his Lord. He will plan his life with the view of doing his utmost to serve that end, and he will take the troubles that come to him as part of the schooling that he needs in view of that vocation.

"The real meaning of the Second Advent teaching of Jesus is the claim to be the rightful Lord of the entire world of human society, and the assertion that one day the Kingdom will come in glory and power, and that all men will inevitably be judged as an incident of that victory by their relation to it. Such a claim of right on the part of the Master obviously carries with it a duty on the part of disciples."†

* Christianity in the Modern World, Cairns, pp. 206–209.
† Ibid, pp. 209–210.

STUDY XIX

HE WAS NUMBERED WITH THE TRANSGRESSORS

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

God commendeth his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

The love of Christ constraineth us: he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past tracing out!

STUDY XIX—HE WAS NUMBERED WITH THE TRANSGRESSORS.

Mark 14–15; Matt. 26–27; Luke 22–23.

Luke records a word of Jesus' which falls from his lips as he enters into the shadow of Gethsemane and Calvary. "For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, And he was numbered with transgressors, for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment" (Luke 22: 37). The words which Jesus quotes are from Isaiah 53, and they plainly indicate in what realm his thoughts were living and what scripture was strengthening his heart.

The same ideal of kingship, the same consciousness of Messiahship, which became articulate in the baptism, emerged triumphant in the struggle of the wilderness and remained undimmed throughout the apparent failure of his ministry, is again confessed in words drawn from the scripture which had been the mirror of his soul from the beginning. Jesus' application of them to himself mirrors for us his own mind as he moves into the enveloping darkness. If in any degree we are able to share his thoughts as we follow him through the tangled web of events, dark with human passions and luminous with Divine compassion, we shall have a new understanding of their meaning for us, because we shall know better their meaning to him.

I. The Master and his Disciples.

Matthew shows us two gatherings, held in different

parts of Jerusalem, seemingly unrelated, yet in the interlacing of events strangely close together (Matt. 26: 1–3). One is the Master with his disciples around him, preparing them for the event which is now at hand; the other is a group of the religious leaders gathered in the house of the High Priest, plotting how that event is to happen.

Notice the recognition there is of the popular feeling for Jesus and the fear of rousing it and thus defeating their aim. From now on each group prepares in its own way—the religious leaders to accomplish their purpose, Jesus to relate his death with the past and with the future in a manner that will remain forever in the memory of the disciples.

Observe how carefully the Passover festival is arranged for. Luke has preserved the words of Jesus which reveal his feelings as he approached this last celebration of the ancient feast with his friends (Luke 22: 15–16). Make yourself familiar with the Passover and its place in Jewish life. Remember that it was essentially a family feast, held in the home and presided over by the head of the house. Two conceptions underlie it—sacrifice and communion, each uniting the participants into fellowship with each other around a common religious experience.

The most sacred memories of the past surrounded this ancient festival; in it every Hebrew renewed his sense of oneness with his people and shared the religious heritage of his race. It is not, then, a mere coincidence that the One who felt himself to be the fulfiller of the past's most ardent hopes and the future's most glowing expectations should make this feast the transition from the past to the future, and link together the sacred festival of the old order with what was to become the central ordinance of the new. In the very act may be seen how Jesus felt himself to be united to both.

Read carefully the words which express this feeling and establish the one unifying sacrament in the Kingdom of God (Mark 14: 22–25; Matt. 26: 26–30; Luke 22: 14–20). Notice how simple are the elements which become for all time the symbols of his own relation to men.

Listen to the words that Jesus uses which tell what was filling his own mind: "This is my blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many." He links his death with the conception of sacrifice; his blood is covenant blood; he himself is the supreme sacrament. It is not without fitness that Luke adds the significant words, "This do in remembrance of me." Into this old feast, with its associations of sacrifice, Jesus puts a content which reflects the way he regarded the death which was so near, changing a seeming martyrdom into an eternal sacrifice.

Throughout the changes of the centuries and the divisions which have marred the unity of those who bear the name of their common Lord, this simple rite has remained as an enduring sacrament, a mute appeal for the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace in all those who recognize the Lordship of the Christ. Different names are applied to it—the Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, yet each includes all, for each leads into the other.

A subject for serious meditation may well be our own personal relation to this sacrament which our Lord himself established. What are our own Communion habits? How much, through example and through helpful invitation, are we aiding others to find refreshment and strength from this inexhaustible source? There is an indefinable power in the Holy Supper to awaken in even the most insensitive something of the feeling expressed in one of the most beautiful of the Communion hymns—

"Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face,
Here would I touch and handle things unseen,
Here grasp with firmer hand the eternal grace,
And all my weariness upon Thee lean."

Again the Fourth Gospel comes to our aid in supplying us with what passed between Jesus and the disciples in the upper room. Read John 13–17, and feel the atmosphere of these last hours permeating the words. They express the confidence and expectation of Jesus; the certainty of his Father; the consciousness of mission completed. All this Jesus took up to and through Calvary, and was sustained by it in his hours of darkness.

II. The Chief Actors in the Conspiracy.

Turn now to the other group of people and study the motives and characteristics which are betrayed in their every word and act. Penetrate beneath the surface of the words and find the minute etching of character. Under the influence of an absorbing passion of love or hate the elemental in man finds the surface and becomes the dominating force.

1. Judas.

Put together John 12:1–6; Mark 14:10–11; John 18:1–5; Mark 14:43–45; Matthew 27:1–5.

How do you describe the man?

How do you account for him?

2. The chief priests.

To what party do they belong?

Why do they figure so prominently now and were so little heard of during the early days of Jesus' ministry?

How do you explain their attitude?

3. The multitude.

What part did the people have in these events?

In how far were they responsible?

Notice how clearly the psychology of the crowd is seen in their behavior.

4. Pilate.

Take Luke's picture of him (ch. 23), with Matthew 27: 24 and John 19: 12–16. How do you explain Pilate?

To study these events through their actors is to take them out of the printed page as mere records of scenes long past, and clothe them with flesh and blood, and see in them the habits of mind with their inevitable reactions which are as old and as new as is human personality itself. It was human minds and human hands that prepared and raised the cross, the same kind of men who walk our city streets today. There is something terribly searching in this reflection.

"Standing afar I summon you anigh him,
Yes, to the multitudes I call and say,
'This is my King! I preach and I deny him—
Christ! Whom I crucify anew today."

F. W. H. Myers: St. Paul.

III. The Way of the Cross.

From the upper room with its sacred experiences filling his heart Jesus goes out into the night and seeks the place which is called a "garden," where he had often gone before, and there enters into his baptism of suffering (Mark 14: 26–50; Luke 22: 39–53). One scene holds us with indescribable power, for in it are all the elements of soul agony, elements which have been present in our own lesser experiences and have drawn from us our human cry for deliverance.

This is not an experience for dissection, but for medi-

tation. The reserve which usually surrounds the deepest moments of a human life is here withdrawn, as though a veil were lifted, and we are allowed to see into the sanctuary of the soul of Jesus and witness its supreme and awful struggle. The confession with which he approaches this experience is simple, human, terribly real. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

For a time darkness has eclipsed the light, the confidence of prayer is replaced by its agony. The supreme Son is the supreme Sufferer. The subtle question of the wilderness away back at the beginning, "Can there be sonship where there is suffering?" is again asked in a more poignant form. "Yes," was the answer of Jesus then—"Yes," is the answer of Jesus now. The "if it be possible" is no demand for exemption, but the cry of the perfectly filial heart to the Father for deliverance, if that deliverance is a possibility. In this is the assertion of the highest form of faith, the revelation of the most perfect filial life.

We see no Stoic before us, ignoring suffering and suppressing its agony, but a finely sensitive soul opening his whole being to the fiery baptism and experiencing to the utmost the reality and mystery of suffering which is vicarious.

The only possible background of thought is the one which has so often been referred to in these studies, that of Isaiah 53; the only adequate conception is Jesus' consciousness that the greatest ideal of service ever conceived has found its reality in him, the King who is the Messiah of suffering because he is the Saviour of the sinning. But as he enters into its desolation, his human

soul shrinks, and he cries out, "If it be possible, remove the cup from me." There is something here that defies analysis, but invites reflection. We are certain that there is here something far deeper and more terrible than physical agony, a spiritual travail which can only be understood from Jesus himself as he consciously relates his death to human sin.

One more human cry breaks from these lips. As the horror of great darkness settles over him on the cross, the silence is broken by a startling cry, "Forsaken!" It tells us that the darkness of spiritual anguish obscured the face of God for him, even as it has for many during the ages since.

Jesus was not forsaken, neither are we, even when our faith cannot penetrate the blackness of spiritual night. In such moments, which come sometimes in life, it means much to hear from the lips of the Supreme Son the cry which is wrung out of our own hearts, and to know that even this cup of spiritual darkness he drained to the dregs. The light broke, and with the confidence of faith we hear his final word: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and he gave up his life.

"We must see how Christ realized his own idea of what his death was to be. In order to do this we must study him in the article of death. And happily in it he stands, as it were, clear in the sunlight. It is not here as in the trial, where the shadow cast of man almost hides him from our view, save when by the graphic hand of John he is drawn forth from the shade and set living and articulate before our eyes. But now in death and on the cross he fills the eye and prospect of the soul, the shadow of man only helping the better to show him clothed with a light which makes the very place of his

feet glorious. In those last hours, how dignified his silence, how divine his speech, how complete his self-sufficiency! Round him there is fretful noise, in him majestic calm; about him violence, within peace. In his last extremity, when man's faith in him has perished, he knows himself, and dies, while he seems to men the vanquished, the conscious Victor of the world."*

"It is not an accident which has drawn the years to act and interact upon the recollections of the cross. What men sought a God for, they have found through it. Comfort, sympathy, inspiration, a sense of oneness with their ideal, forgiveness, consecration, guidance, indomitable hope—these and much more Calvary has actually given them. What they mean by the word God—redeeming, transforming, glorifying love, lays hold of, masters, moulds, vitalizes them through the crucified. They cannot bear truthful witness to their own experience save as they declare, 'God commendeth his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' "†

* Studies in the Life of Christ, Fairbairn, pp. 316, 317.
† Social Aspects of the Cross, Coffin, pp. 75, 76.

STUDY XX
ALIVE FOREVERMORE

I am the first and the last and the Living one: and I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore.

STUDY XX—ALIVE FOREVERMORE.

Mark 16, Matt. 28, Luke 24.

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2: 22–24).

"God has not allowed His Holy One to see corruption. In that tomb, the gloomiest earth had known, because the grave of the holiest known to earth, a torch had been lighted that made sable Death luminous, and forced from him his dread secret, translating it into resurrection and life. And so there was set under the weak but wishful feet of hope no instinct of the human heart or inference of the human reason, but the strong rock of historical yet eternal fact, the person of the risen Christ."*

In these quotations two centuries face each other, the first and the nineteenth, separated by everything which differentiates the primitive from the modern, yet linked together by a tie which annihilates time and race, country and civilization, and find their unity in the deepest consciousness of religious experience, the consciousness of the Christ who lives and enters into personal fellowship with men.

* Studies in the Life of Christ, Fairbairn, pp. 333–334.

This persistent, transforming belief, as strong in the twentieth century as in the first, rests upon foundations which nothing has been able to destroy, foundations that do not belong alone to written records, but to the life which produced those records and to the life which has verified their truth in the religious experience of the centuries which have been nourished and sustained by them since.

I. The Resurrection Story.

Read the narrative in the Synoptics and with it read the one which is given in John (chapter 20). Examine these records carefully. Make a note of the differences in detail, yet notice the many resemblances. Upon what central fact is there agreement? Observe in the printing of the 16th of Mark, in the American Revised Version, a space between verses 8 and 9, and the marginal explanation.

In the two oldest and most important manuscripts, dating from the fourth century, verses 9 to 20 of Mark 16 are not found. Eusebius, the earliest church historian, remarks upon their absence in what he calls "the accurate copies." Both of these manuscripts close abruptly with the preposition "for." What happened to the end of this gospel is unknown; the verses which stand at the close of the book were evidently added to complete what was recognized as unfinished.

Some years ago an English scholar discovered an Armenian manuscript which refers these verses to the "presbyter" Aristion. Eusebius mentions a man by this name, referred to by Papias, which would place him in the first quarter of the second century and put him in the line of the apostolic tradition. However this may be,

there is nothing lost in the discovery that Mark's record of the Resurrection is unfinished, for in the eight original verses which we have, the great fact is stated, and it is the fact which is important and not the details, interesting as the details are.

When we turn to Luke, we find the evidence of a special source from which he drew largely, which contained details not given elsewhere. From Luke's own statement in the introduction to his gospel we are told that an abundance of material concerning the life of Jesus was already in existence, and that in the writing of his gospel he had taken great care to trace with accuracy the course of the events which he had undertaken to compile (1 : 1–4). That Luke had a large and important source peculiar to himself, which he used in his gospel, is most evident to anyone who examines it carefully. The Resurrection narrative itself shows this.

Reconstruct for yourself the story of the Resurrection, beginning from the point where the last study closes, and see if you can see it and feel it from the standpoint of the disciples. Once again the non-essentials fall away, the differences in detail are forgotten in the presence of the one absorbing conviction, "He that was dead is alive forevermore."

Our four gospels were not the first written account of the Resurrection; indeed, they were not written until thirty-five or forty years after the event which they chronicle. We are very safe, then, in saying that unless the central fact which these gospels have preserved had been proved by incontrovertible evidence we would never have had the record at all; in fact, our entire New Testament is the result of and the evidence for the Resurrection. For the supreme evidence of the Resurrection

is to be found in what it created in the first century and what it has created in all the centuries since. The Resurrection was the corner-stone of apostolic teaching long before it became a part of the written history of Christianity. We are thus dealing with a fact which compelled its own record in the history of Christian origins.

II. The Experiences of Men with the Risen Lord.

There is nothing more transparently evident than the complete bewilderment into which the disciples were thrown by the Resurrection of Jesus and their refusal to believe in its reality. The state of incredulity to which Luke refers may be taken as an accurate portrayal of the situation: "And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved them" (Luke 24: 11). Matthew also mentions the reluctance of some of the disciples to believe in the reality of Jesus' identity, even when he was visible to them (Matt. 28: 16–17).

In the account which Luke gives us of the two men who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus there is reflected the disappointed hopes and confusion of mind which was shared by all of the disciples (Luke 24: 13–35). These men did not belong to the company of the Twelve, but they appear to have been related to them in faith and sympathy. The one topic of conversation is what has happened to their Master in Jerusalem and the startling reports which have come to their ears that some have seen him alive.

Read the narrative carefully and notice how these men pour into the ears of the stranger who has joined them, the whole story, even their disappointed Messianic hopes—"But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel." In this conversation we can see the

mental situation as it existed in the minds of the disciples after the crucifixion.

Come now to the revelation of himself which Jesus gave to these disappointed and confused men. In the words he addressed to them, do you catch the same notes which you have heard in former days? There is the same sense that in him the past finds it meaning and fulfilment, and the same insistence upon the necessity of his suffering.

Meditate upon the words, "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer," or "Ought not the Messiah to suffer and to enter into his glory?" The words convey a sense of moral obligation. What that moral obligation is we understand only in so far as the mind of Christ becomes known to us and we allow him to lead us into his thoughts and to share with us his compelling sense of responsibility for men. There is something fearfully real in this assertion that his suffering belongs to the moral order of the world.

The recognition of the identity of their guest broke upon the men through a familiar act. This experience sent them to their friends, whom they found discussing a similar occurrence which had come to Peter, and is followed by an appearance to them all as they were gathered together. Luke more than the other evangelists materializes the body of Jesus, and yet stresses its spiritual character. Though we may not draw any definite conclusions as to the nature of the spiritual body from these attempts to describe the resurrection body of our Lord, yet they tell us what we desire most to be sure of, the survival of personal identity and its recognition through the medium of a spiritual body which is entirely suitable and adequate for the spiritual world to

which the person belongs. That Jesus lived and had "shown himself alive after his passion by many proofs" was the corner-stone of apostolic Christianity.

The Resurrection was the keynote of the primitive gospel. "From the very beginning men were persuaded that the Resurrection was a fact because they saw it operate as a moral power."* Nowhere can this statement be tested more fully and more convincingly than in the conversion of Paul and his life after that event. The best study that can be made by anyone of the reality and power of the Resurrection is a study of Paul. The man challenges an explanation, and if his own explanation is not accepted, "And last of all as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also" (I Cor. 15: 8), "Have not I seen Jesus our Lord?" (I Cor. 9: 1), and "I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3: 12), the burden of another explanation to account for this transformed and vitalized man, rests upon those who decline to accept his own.

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, written somewhere near 56 A. D., contains the first written statement of the Resurrection (I Cor. 15: 1–8). The book of Acts, which recounts the history of primitive Christianity, is a source from which the primitive preaching may be studied. A study of the Acts and of the Pauline letters is indispensable for an understanding of the place which the Resurrection of Jesus held in the thought and experience of the early church.

III. The Significance of the Resurrection in the Faith of the Christian.

1. It vindicates the expectation which the Christ of the gospels has aroused, and demonstrates the validity

* Jesus and the Gospel, Denney, p. 129.

of the consciousness of his own supreme place in the faith of men. Paul's words express this for us—"who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

2. It universalizes the revelation which was incarnate in Jesus, and demonstrates his ability to bring to consummation his gospel of the Kingdom of God, the new social order which is the Divine Commonwealth upon the earth. The Jewish Messiah has become the world's Saviour and Lord.

3. It reveals the reality of the world of spirit and unites this life with that which is to come in a continuity which even death itself cannot interrupt.

4. It pledges to us the survival of personal identity beyond the grave, the perpetuity of personality clothed in what Paul calls "a spiritual body."

IV. The Christ of Experience.

There remains for every one of us to put to the test in our own lives the reality of the living Christ, and thus to become in our own generation witnesses of the Resurrection. To be a Christian is to stand in a direct personal relation to Jesus Christ, to acknowledge his Lordship, and to be moulded by his standards, to have, as Paul says, "his mind" as the formation pattern of our own. This involves a fellowship, constant and growing, which becomes the dynamic of life, silently changing its ideals, re-creating its purposes, energizing its will, and sanctifying its entire activities, until there comes to be realized in human personality the filial relation with God, and

with men the life of brotherhood, the Kingdom which Jesus died to establish and rose again triumphantly to achieve through men who in fellowship with him demonstrate the reality of his gospel.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen."

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